

# Consultation Statement

## Sonning Neighbourhood Plan 2025 - 2040



Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

Sonning Parish Council  
Pearson Road  
Sonning Berkshire RG4 6UL  
Tel: 0118 969 7753  
snp@sonning-pc.gov.uk

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## 1. Introduction

This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Section 15(2). Part 5 of the Regulations sets out that a Consultation Statement should contain:

- a) details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
- b) how they were consulted;
- c) a summary of the key issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;
- d) a description of how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

### 1.1 Purpose

This Consultation Statement has been prepared to accompany the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan when put forward to Wokingham Borough Council for approval to progress to the examination stage. It is a summary of the consultation process undertaken to engage the community living and working, or having businesses or landed interests, in the parish of Sonning as well as statutory consultees.

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (designed to cover the period up to 2040) was prepared with the local community in the Parish by the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SG), comprising representatives of Sonning Parish Council (SPC) and the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society (SSES), other volunteers and with expert advice, guidance, and support from consultants AECOM and ONH.

The process followed was intended to foster community engagement and feedback, including through public meetings, face to face engagement, stalls, posters, banners, magazines and electronic communications via the various email, social media and online channels used by the village community and the parish council.



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## 1.2 WBC Approval

Consideration had been given by SPC and SSES for several years to the need for Sonning to develop its own neighbourhood plan. Planning documents such as the Sonning Parish Design Statement (2004) and the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal (2017) have helped to define the character of the village and establish standards for future development, they are guidance documents whereas a NP has statutory status. It is for this reason that SPC and SSES decided in 2019 to produce the SNP. A formal application was submitted by SPC requesting permission to proceed and approval was granted by WBC on 24 October 2019 for SPC to develop a Neighbourhood Plan covering the whole parish of Sonning, the boundaries of which are shown in the designated map below:



Map 1. Boundaries of Sonning Parish, the same area as the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan



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### 1.3 Public Meeting

A public meeting, held in Pearson Hall on 18 February 2020 at the beginning of the SNP process, attracted over 100 residents. A joint SPC and SSES team outlined the NP process to the attendees and then answered the many questions that came from the floor. Many volunteers gave their contact details and a Steering Group (SG) was formed to address the different aspects that need to be covered in the SNP, such as the demand for new housing, the impact on the conservation area and the local environment and the resulting visions, objectives and policies that need to be established to guide the process. As Sonning has grown in the past 100 years and now spreads well beyond the boundaries of the conservation area it was necessary also to ensure that the voices were heard from all sections of the community. Once established the Steering Group met physically and online (as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic) and prepared a questionnaire to elicit the views of the community.



### 1.4 Questionnaire

The 28-page questionnaire was issued to all residents in hard and soft copy format in April 2021 with a closing date of 10 May 2021. The questionnaire comprised the following sections:

- Section 1 - About You (demographics)
- Section 2 - Housing (current, future, views on proposed development sites)
- Section 3 - Local Environment (importance, green spaces)
- Section 4 - Social & Community Facilities (importance and needs)
- Section 5 - Local Facilities & Businesses (usage and needs)
- Section 6 - Sonning Conservation Area (importance)
- Section 7 - Infrastructure, Travel & Transport (adequacy & needs)
- Section 8 - Allocation of CIL (suggestions).

A copy of the questionnaire can be viewed online within the SNP website at [https://sonning.info/snp/Docs/QN1.online\\_1.41.pdf](https://sonning.info/snp/Docs/QN1.online_1.41.pdf).

Residents were notified by a maildrop of the imminent delivery of the questionnaire (see copy in appendix 2). A hard copy was delivered by volunteers to each household, the names of the local representatives who delivered the questionnaire were provided in case residents had any questions. Residents could fill in and return the hard copy provided or complete the questionnaire online and if more than one return was desired to be made this was also encouraged in order to give as wide a coverage of views as possible.

The questionnaire elicited a very good response with 53% of the households in the parish submitting a return. The results, collated and analysed by the Steering Group, are described in the respective sections of this plan providing support to the resulting objectives and policies.






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## 1.5 Consultancy Support

The SNP Steering Group, acting through SPC, took advantage of the support provided by DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) that was provided through Locality and obtained technical assistance from consultancy firm AECOM in the following areas:

Housing needs assessment	Design codes	Evidence base and policy development
		

In addition to funding the expenses incurred in the preparation of the draft SNP, the DLUHC grant was also used to appoint consultants O’Neill Homer to provide overall support to the steering group and specific input to the sections on Local Environment and Infrastructure. One of the policies incorporated in the draft SNP related to proposed local gaps and the Steering Group decided to appoint a specialist landscape architect, Briarwood Landscape Architecture, to carry out a study in order to add weight to the evidence base supporting this policy.

## 1.6 Drafting the SNP

Progress on the development of the draft SNP was reported through publications such as the SPC newsletters and the quarterly “Bridge” magazine published by SSES.

This draft version of the SNP takes account of feedback from residents over the period since February 2020, when the first public meeting took place in Pearson Hall. Most significantly it encapsulates feedback to the questionnaire that was circulated to all residents in the Spring of 2021 and the local consultation which ended in November 2022.

As the draft SNP evolved WBC recommended that it should be screened for compliance with SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) and HRA (Habitats Regulation Assessment) requirements. This was facilitated by WBC in late 2024 and confirmation was received from Historic England and Natural England that full assessments were unlikely to be needed.

Regular and effective contact between the SNP Steering Group and WBC was established to facilitate exchanges of ideas and the resolution of queries, the Steering Group would like to thank James McCabe and Ian Church of WBC for their guidance and help in this respect.

## 1.7 Consultation with the community and WBC

The steps taken in the preparation of the SNP were outlined in the previous paragraph. The views of residents were taken into account through their responses to the Questionnaire and through the informal consultation process on the first draft that commenced on September 10 and ended on 30 November 2022. Throughout the process residents were encouraged to follow the progress of the SNP on the website <https://sonning.info/snp> which provided online access to all the draft documents as well as a forum for residents’ comments.



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A draft of the SNP was sent to WBC for their review and comment on 27 September 2022. A virtual Teams meeting took place on 10 October 2022 attended by representatives of WBC, SPC and SSES. This was followed up by a list of WBC comments received on 20 October. A second Teams meeting, based on WBC's review of the updated draft SNP, took place in February 2023 and the comments received from WBC thereafter have been taken account of in this draft. Further face to face meetings between the Steering Group and WBC took place in 2024 to discuss and agree the process for the call for sites that had been decided following the issue of the revised NPPF in December 2023. The final draft was shared with WBC in September 2024. The requirements of SEA and HRA have been considered in the production of this draft Neighbourhood Plan and screening consultation has been undertaken separately in accordance with the relevant legal requirements

The final draft of the pre-submission neighbourhood plan was presented to the Parish Council at the meeting held on 11 March 2025, where it was approved to commence the Regulation 14 consultation.

The Regulation 14 consultation was conducted online and by maildrop notification to all households in the Parish (see maildrop in appendix 11) over the nine weeks from the 30 May to 31 July 2025. The period was extended from the initial six week period of 30 May to 18 July at the suggestion of WBC. Statutory and non-statutory consultees, (see list in appendix 13) were contacted directly by the Parish, and there was further publicity on the Parish Council website, SSES magazine "Bridge" and the Facebook page "Sonning Buzz". The consultation included both the draft Neighbourhood Plan itself and the design code, and in addition to being published online a paper copy was available at the Parish Council Offices and local libraries in Woodley and Twyford. During this period the steering group also ran a consultation event in the local village hall (Pearson Hall) on 14 June 2025, to raise aware amongst members of the public who might not otherwise have seen the plan, and to provide an easy and convenient forum for making comments.



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## 2. Production of the Neighbourhood Plan

### 2.1 Objective & Approach

The objective of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan consultation process was:

- To involve as much of the community as possible throughout all consultation stages of Plan development so that the Plan was informed by the views of local people and other stakeholders from the start of the Neighbourhood Planning process;
- Ensure that consultation events took place at critical points in the process where decisions needed to be taken, engaging with as wide a range of people and groups as possible;
- Ensure that progress, including following consultation, was shared with local people in a variety of formats and media.

### 2.2 Timeline summary

Timing	Activity
October 2019	WBC approval for Sonning Parish Council to develop a NP covering the whole of the Parish of Sonning.
January 2020	Article in SSES magazine Bridge informing residents of the impending public meeting (see Article 1).
February 2020	Maildrop to all Sonning residents (see Appendix 1) notifying them of forthcoming public meeting. Public meeting in Pearson Hall, attended by over 100 residents, to announce the start of the SNP process and to invite volunteers to participate in the steering group. SNP website set up ( <a href="https://sonning.info/snp">https://sonning.info/snp</a> ) and maintained throughout the SNP development process to inform residents of progress.
March 2021	Article in SSES magazine Bridge encouraging residents to respond to Questionnaire (see Article 2).



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Timing	Activity
April-May 2021	Questionnaire issued to all Sonning households (copy of maildrop in Appendix 2, copy of questionnaire by hyperlink).
July 2021	Residents informed of response via SNP website.
December 2021	Residents alerted to WBC Local Plan Update via SNP website and encouraged to submit their comments.
January 2022	Maildrop to Sonning residents with feedback on responses to Questionnaire. Residents encouraged via SNP website to respond to WBC on local green spaces (see Appendix 3).
September 2022	Maildrop to all Sonning households with a summary of the first draft of SNP (v2.1) Appendix 5, and a link to full version and notification of Open Day in Pearson Hall on 5 November 2022 (see Appendix 4). Article in SSES magazine Bridge encouraging residents to comment on draft SNP (see Article 3).
October 2022	Virtual meeting between SG and WBC re SNP (see email Appendix 6).
November 2022	Open day in Pearson Hall at which members of the steering group showed a summary of the SNP and answered questions.
February 2023	Version 2.23 of SNP issued for comment via SNP website.
March 2023	Virtual meeting between SG and WBC re SNP (see email Appendix 7).
August 2023	Locality approved AECOM technical support for Housing Needs Assessment, Design Codes and Evidence Based Policy Development.
November 2023	AECOM submit draft Housing Needs Assessment report.
December 2023	AECOM submit draft Design Codes report.



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Timing	Activity
February 2024	SPC issues call for sites to 6 landowners prompted by changes to NPPF (Appendix 8). Maildrop delivered to all households informing residents (see Appendix 9).
March 2024	Article in SSES magazine Bridge regarding call for sites (see Article 4).
March 2024	Meeting between SG and WBC to discuss outcome of call for sites.
March 2024	AECOM submit final Housing Needs Assessment report and final Design Codes report.
April 2024	Notification via SNP website that no suitable sites were submitted in the previous call for sites.
July 2024	Article in SSES magazine Bridge updating residents on result of the call for sites (see Article 5).
July 2024	AECOM submit draft Evidence Based Policy Development Report.
August 2024	AECOM submit final Evidence Based Policy Development Report.
September 2024	SG send pre-Reg 14 draft of SNP to WBC.
October 2024	Virtual Teams meeting between SG and WBC Email response from WBC Appendix 10.
December 2024	Article in SSES magazine Bridge with update on status of SNP (see Article 6).
March 2025	Full Sonning Parish Council approves the draft Neighbourhood plan to proceed to Regulation 14 consultation.



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Timing	Activity
April 2025	Article in SSES magazine Bridge announcing Reg 14 consultation (see Article 7).
May 2025	Maildrop to all Sonning residents advising of the Regulation 14 consultation between 30 May and 31 July (see Appendix 11). Copy of the Reg 14 SNP on SNP website <a href="https://sonning.info/snp">https://sonning.info/snp</a> .
May – July 2025	Regulation 14 Consultation takes place, with website, social media on Facebook page Sonning Buzz, an open day in Pearson Hall, hard copies of Reg 14 SNP available through Parish Clerk and at local libraries at Woodley and Twyford.
August 2025	SG meeting with WBC to discuss WBC comments on Reg 14 consultation (see Appendix 12).
November 2025	ONH produce the Basic Conditions Statement (see <a href="https://sonning.info/snp/Docs/SNP%20Basic%20Conditions%20Statement%20October%202025_v2.pdf">https://sonning.info/snp/Docs/SNP Basic Conditions Statement October 2025 v2.pdf</a> ).
November 2025	Full Sonning Parish Council to approve final draft of the plan for submission to Wokingham Borough Council under Regulation 15.



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### 3. List of statutory and other consultees

WBC were consulted on the statutory consultees who should be contacted in the Regulation 14 process. A copy of the list received from WBC is available in Appendix 13. SG added local MP, WBC councillors, local parish clerks and local landowners or their agents.

### 4. Summary of key issues and concerns raised during the Consultation

#### 4.1 Feedback summary

The feedback received throughout the development of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan has been positive. The Neighbourhood Plan that has been produced reflects a coherent vision for the development of Sonning through to 2040.

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance of both the historic village centre, and of the village's rural setting, prioritising the protection of green spaces both within and around Sonning, as well as the safeguarding of community facilities. WBC-approved sites for development have been commented upon and the proposed new site at the University Farm, Bull Close, has been given positive support.

A separate summary of the representations received from the statutory bodies below has been prepared in conjunction with ONH and is shown in the separate document [Appendix 14: Analysis of Statutory Body Representations](#).

Representations were received from:

1. WBC
2. Thames Water
3. Stantec (on behalf of the University of Reading)
4. Pro Vision (on behalf of Holme Park Farm Partnership)
5. Sport England
6. Avison Young (on behalf of Natural Gas Transmission)
7. Natural England

No other statutory bodies that were consulted made representations, including neighbouring councils (although Twyford Parish Council responded but had no comments to make).

Two residents submitted comments by email and five residents attended the open day in Pearson Hall but did not have any comments to make on the draft SNP.



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## 4.2 Community feedback table

This table summarises the feedback received from the community during the Regulation 14 consultation process.

Policy Area	Representation and Response
Non policy specific	<p>Thanks to everyone involved in the development of the plan. I remain hugely disappointed at the WBC housing allocation for Sonning, when there is no little or no brownfield development land, and so any scheme threatens our green space in the way that the two extant permissions on the golf course do. And of course the pressure from central government to keep building remains. Against this backdrop the plan is all we can hope for.</p> <p>Sadly today we heard of the demise of the Village Hamper, referred to in the document, so reducing facilities in the Parish. For me, recognising that relative lack of facilities, and protecting the green space, in particular that which provides a buffer zone to Charvil, remains hugely important, as acknowledged by the plan.</p> <p><b>Noted; no amendments needed</b></p>
Traffic and Travel	<p>Overall, the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan is an excellent document and very well done to all who have contributed.</p> <p>My only comment is on Section 8 – Traffic and Travel and the two references to a possible Third Bridge to alleviate traffic through Sonning:</p> <p><i>“The proposal of a third Thames crossing in the local vicinity has been mooted for a very long time. This would effectively act as a by-pass for the village, reduce traffic flows and the associated problems of traffic jams and pollution.”</i></p> <p>And later</p> <p><i>“Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils have pursued options for a potential new crossing of the Thames, strongly supported by SPC and SSES, but councils to the North of the river are presently objecting to this proposal due to the fear of excessive traffic overloading the highways in Oxfordshire.”</i></p>



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Policy Area	Representation and Response
	<p>I suggest that a much more detailed and clear statement must be included in this section. It must strongly express the dramatic impact to the village of the traffic flow over Sonning Bridge. Oxfordshire County Council objections are totally biased because, it is clear, that much of the traffic is created by residents of Oxfordshire, crossing the Thames via Sonning Bridge to go to work, and as a route to other destinations in Berkshire and beyond. Oxfordshire's objections are unacceptable. With the nearest alternatives in Reading and Henley the extension of the A329M is the obvious solution.</p> <p>The provision of a third bridge must be a key requirement for the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan. It would have the most substantial impact on all the key requirements that are stated in the Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Dramatically reduce traffic flows</li> <li>· Significantly reduce pollution</li> <li>· Reduce noise</li> <li>· Improve the environment for walkers and cyclists</li> <li>· Retain the historic atmosphere of the village</li> </ul> <p><b>Reply from SG:</b></p> <p>Many thanks for your email and your comments on the SNP.</p> <p>We are required to keep a note of all comments received and I thank you for being the first resident to respond.</p> <p>I think it's fair to say that we share your feelings about the third bridge and an earlier draft of the SNP included the valid points you raise. However, our consultants advised us that major roads (along with other infrastructure such as water/sewage and Broadband) cannot be a part of a Neighbourhood Plan which must confine itself to planning matters. We were told that the external examiner (who is next to inspect the SNP and who's word is final) would remove any policies or strong comments about a new bridge. So we have been forced to limit our policies to the elements we can affect and unfortunately can only make a minor comment.</p> <p>So, although personally I completely agree with your sentiments, a Third Bridge is something that will need to be pursued down different routes.</p>



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Policy Area	Representation and Response
	<p><b>Reply from resident:</b></p> <p>Thanks for your reply and explanation. Perhaps the two paragraphs could be strengthened a little without causing the external examiner to wield his red pen!</p> <p>Para 1</p> <p>“The proposal of a third Thames crossing in the local vicinity has been mooted for a very long time. This would effectively act as a by-pass for the village, and thus would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· dramatically reduce traffic flows and queues</li> <li>· significantly reduce pollution and noise</li> <li>· improve the environment for walkers and cyclists</li> <li>· retain the historic atmosphere of the village.”</li> </ul> <p>Para 2</p> <p>“Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils have pursued options for a potential new crossing of the Thames, strongly supported by SPC and SSES. Councils to the North of the river are presently objecting to this proposal due to the fear of excessive traffic overloading the highways in Oxfordshire. However, it must be noted that vehicles from Oxfordshire are a very significant part of the high traffic flows through Sonning itself.”</p> <p>Again many thanks for all the work you have all done over several years.</p> <p><b><i>Noted; amendments were made to accomodate these suggestions</i></b></p>



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## 5. Conclusion

The process to develop this Neighbourhood Plan has provided a good opportunity for community engagement across a wide variety of topics that have a significant impact on the daily lives of all who live in Sonning. At each stage of the process close attention has been given to all input and feedback to ensure that the final policies are an accurate reflection of the views and aspirations of the Sonning community.



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# Appendices to Accompany

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### Sonning Neighbourhood Plan 2025 - 2040

1. Letter to Residents - Public Meeting 18/2/2020
2. Letter to Residents - Questionnaire
3. Letter to Residents - Questionnaire update and LPU
4. Letter to Residents - Open Day 5/1//2022
5. Summary of Draft Neighbourhood Plan October 2022
6. Email from WBC re: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan - 20/10/2022
7. Email from WBC re: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan - 31/03/2023
8. Letter to Land Owners - Call for Sites
9. Letter to Residents - Plan Update and Call for Sites
10. Email from WBC re: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan - 24/10/2024
11. Maildrop to Residents - Update and Regulation 14 Information
12. Email from WBC re: Local Gap - 04/08/2025
13. List of Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees

#### Articles in the Bridge Newsletter

1. Winter 2019
2. Spring 2021
3. Autumn 2022
4. Spring 2024
5. Summer 2024
6. Winter 2024
7. Spring 2025



Residents of Sonning

7<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Dear Sonning Residents,

***Do you value where you live?***

We as a village have the opportunity to put forward a **Neighbourhood Development Plan for Sonning** which will have legal standing in the planning process. This is important if we want to have any influence on our environment and value the option to have a say in all future developments.

**If we do not have a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Sonning then Wokingham's Local Plan Update will control all of these decisions**

Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society are writing to you personally to encourage you to come to a public meeting where the subject of the Neighbourhood Development Plan will be presented.

**Public Meeting**  
**For all Sonning Residents**  
**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February**  
**at Pearson Hall**  
**Doors open 7pm, starts 7.30pm**

We hope to take less than an hour to explain to you what an NDP is and why Sonning urgently needs one. Then we would like to hear your thoughts and will open the discussion to everyone, during which time drinks and nibbles will be available, and we will take questions. Please join us at any point during the evening.

We very much look forward to welcoming you on the 18<sup>th</sup> February. If you are unable to attend and would like to know more, please get in touch with us at [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info) or visit the [sonning.info](http://sonning.info) website.

Yours sincerely,

  
Anthony Farnese  
Chairman of Sonning Parish Council

  
Mike H  
Chairman of Sonning & Sonning Eye Society





Old Forge Cottage  
Pearson Road  
Sonning RG4 6UH

Telephone [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Date:

Dear

### **SONNING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – PEARSON ROAD RESIDENTS**

You are probably aware that Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society are jointly preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning. In order to be sure that the plan is representative of the views of Sonning residents a Questionnaire has been produced which will be issued to all households shortly.

The Neighbourhood Plan is important for us and future generations because once it has been adopted by Wokingham Borough Council the Neighbourhood Plan will have statutory powers to determine what development can take place in the village and where it can be located.

Each household will receive a hardcopy of the Questionnaire but we would like to know the views of all the adults (16+ years) in the Parish, so please follow the links below to download an interactive version which you can complete and return using your computer, tablet or even your mobile phone.

I am writing to you to let you know that I am your local coordinator and will be delivering a hard copy of the Questionnaire to you in the coming days, I am also available to assist if you have any questions or need help in completing it.

As explained in the Questionnaire itself it can be completed either in hard copy or online. If you complete it in hard copy please drop the completed form through my letterbox.

Best regards,

Mike Hart

Download link: [https://sonning.info/public/SNP\\_QN1.3\\_Draft\\_for\\_testing.pdf](https://sonning.info/public/SNP_QN1.3_Draft_for_testing.pdf)





Your opportunity to  
shape the future of  
Sonning



8<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Sonning Resident,

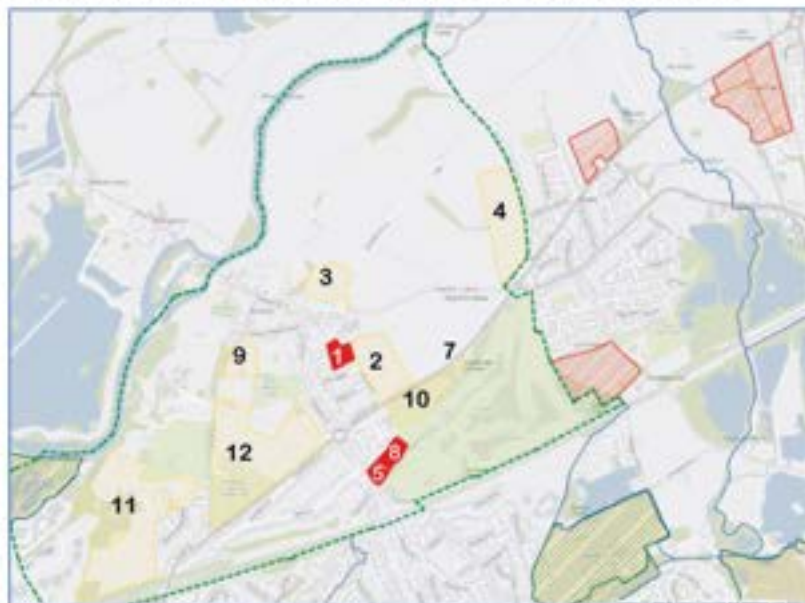
Many thanks to all of you who submitted a response to the Questionnaire in May 2021, submissions were received from 53% of Sonning properties, the high level demonstrating a keen desire of Sonning residents to take part in shaping the future of our village.

### Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy

We are writing to you now to draw your attention to the LPU: Revised Growth Strategy which has been issued by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) for consultation following the loss of Grazeley as a new town site. This revised LPU incorporates three of the development sites in Sonning that were listed in our questionnaire, **Site 1 (Bull Close) and Sites 5 & 8**, now combined (Sonning Golf Course).

These "proposed allocations" are depicted as red areas on the map; other "submitted sites" are shown hatched in yellow --->

The consultation now runs until 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (the final date stated previously has been put back a week) and all residents have been asked to submit their thoughts: Site 1 (25 houses) has been in the earlier Local Plans for some years and Site 5 (13 houses) has already received planning permission on appeal, so the only additional site being proposed at this stage is the expanded Site 5, renamed Site 8 (and now with 37 houses).



Sites 5 and 8 were ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively out of the total 11 sites in your Questionnaire responses to "Which of the above sites do you approve of as suitable areas for housing development?" Whilst this would indicate that residents are not overly concerned about further development on Sonning Golf Club this is not a view shared by SPC and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society. The Old Redingensians Association are looking to put 100 dwellings on RAMS (Site 10) and there are strong rumours that developers are planning to submit an application for development of the whole of Sonning Golf Course. So Site 8 needs careful consideration.

Incorporation of a site in the LPU indicates that the planning authority is highly likely to approve development of that site. Once adopted, the Local Plan is the most important document defining where development will take place. The Neighbourhood Plan sits below the Local Plan in the hierarchy but must be consistent with it, so it cannot recommend that development does not take place on sites that are included in the Local Plan.

For the above reasons it is important that you voice your opinions through the LPU consultation process. The consultation ends on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 so there isn't much time to act! Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society are poised to make representations regarding development of Site 8 and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group asks that you do likewise through [wngugs.wokingham.gov.uk](http://wngugs.wokingham.gov.uk)

**Local Green Spaces** – we *urgently* need to suggest pieces of land that "form part of the character" of our parish and which should be protected from development. Please visit [sonning.info](http://sonning.info) so that you can show your support.



## Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

### Open Day in Pearson Hall Saturday November 5<sup>th</sup> - 11am to 5pm

Meet members of the Steering Group, ask questions, discuss the options and let us know what you think about the Plan.

Dear Sonning Resident,

Thank you for responding to the questionnaire about the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan that was delivered to all residents in the Spring of last year. 53% of households completed the questionnaire which gave the Steering Group a good idea of residents' views on the aspects of Sonning that they treasure most. Based on this information we have produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan which is now available for your review and comments at [sonning.info](http://sonning.info)



Attached to this letter is a short summary of the key issues covered by the Plan together with a link to the whole document.

We will be holding an open day in Pearson Hall on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at which you are welcome to ask questions of members of the Steering Group and provide them with your comments. If you are unable to attend in person we would still like to hear from you so please submit your comments by email to [comments@sonning.info](mailto:comments@sonning.info) or by posting them through the Sonning Parish Council office letter box at Pearson Hall.

All comments received will be taken into account before the updated draft is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council in early 2023 for their review and the review by an independent examiner. The approved draft will then be subject to a referendum of Sonning residents before being adopted.

Please take this opportunity to make your comments on this first draft of your Neighbourhood Plan, whether you agree or disagree with the draft it is very important that you express your views now so that the Plan can be truly representative.

Best regards



J. [Redacted] Chair of the Steering Group



## Summary of the draft Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning October 2022

Sonning is a quintessential Thames-side village much loved by its residents and visitors alike. Located at a strategic crossing point of the River Thames it is steeped in history, surrounded by beautiful countryside and contains many historic listed buildings within its Conservation Area. The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) recognises the importance of the village's heritage and natural environment but also takes account of the need for a sustainable future in which it can support appropriate economic development and respond to the call for the provision of additional housing.

### **OVERALL VISION**

*Sonning will continue be known by people at all stages of their lives as one of Berkshire's best Parish communities in which to live; for its semi-rural historic village character and countryside landscapes; and for its attractive green lanes, green spaces and thriving natural environment. The neighbourhood will be safe, clean, and will be well connected to the neighbouring parishes by unpolluted roads and pathways. Any new development will protect or enhance Sonning's rural settlements and provide good quality housing that is in keeping with the distinct character areas across the Parish, and is appropriate for the needs of the community.*



## What are the next steps?

The draft Plan has to be consistent with the Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Local Plan, the latest version of which is not expected to be available for public consultation until early 2023. For this reason some of the policies in the draft related to housing are still provisional.

The next steps to be taken are as follows:

- ◇ This brief summary of the draft Plan with a link to the full document has been delivered to all residents in October 2022.
- ◇ A public open day in Pearson Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
- ◇ Updated draft to be submitted to WBC for review and independent examination in early 2023.
- ◇ Referendum within the Parish followed by formal adoption.

## Key Issues – Housing Needs

- ◇ Sonning today comprises 670 dwellings and a population of around 1,750.
- ◇ Sonning’s population increased between 1.01% and 1.22% per annum between 2001 and 2019.
- ◇ If this growth continues, the population will increase from its current 1,750 to between 2,035 and 2,100 at the end of the 16 year plan period in 2038. Assuming an average household size of 2.5 persons, this growth would require between 113 – 140 new dwellings.
- ◇ The Plan envisages a more modest population increase over the given period with fewer new houses than the above figures.

## Key Issues – New Housing

- ◇ Eleven potential new sites were considered by WBC in their LPU (Local Plan Update). None of the sites were favoured by residents in their responses to the questionnaire.
- ◇ Only two sites were included by WBC in the draft LPU (which is still being finalised): Site 1 (25 houses at Bull Close) and Site 8 (24 houses on Sonning Golf Course).
- ◇ Site 1 has been in successive Local Plans for a long time and is likely to be retained in the LPU.
- ◇ Both Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society objected to Site 8. As the LPU is still under review it is not yet known if WBC will remove this site from the final draft LPU.

The following Vision, Objective and Policies related to Housing are included in the draft Plan:

### **VISION – Housing**

*Any new development will protect or enhance Sonning’s rural settlements and provide good quality housing that is in keeping with the distinct character areas across the Parish, and is appropriate for the needs of the community.*

### **OBJECTIVE – Meeting Sonning’s Housing Need**

*In order to maintain its village nature surrounded by farmland and its rich natural environment and in recognition of the fact that there are no suitable sites for any substantial development within the parish boundary, the demand for new housing will be met through limited small scale development, to a high standard, surrounded by green space and suitable for the elderly.*

### **POLICY – Infill (not involving demolition of existing properties)**

*Sympathetic proposals for infill development on sites within the parish will be entertained subject to the following criteria:*

*The scale of development is appropriate to the neighbouring area and does not have an adverse impact on its character;*

*Important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view harmed;*

*If the proposal constitutes backland development it would not create problems of privacy and access would not extend the built limits of the village;*

*It does not conflict with other policies in the Plan or LPU.*

### **POLICY – Demolition and Replacement**

*Applications to demolish existing houses and replace them with single or multiple dwellings will be reviewed on their merits taking account of the scale of the proposed development and the need to maintain the character of the area.*

*Replacement of residential buildings with commercial buildings will not normally be approved. No proposals that increase the massing and height of the existing dwellings or which will change the distinct character of the area will be approved.*

### **POLICY - SITE 1 (BULL CLOSE)**

*The site will be developed for 25 small to medium sized housing units, especially suitable for the elderly, either by a developer or under a Community Right To Build Order (CRTBO).*

*At least 75% of the dwellings will be 1 or 2 bedroom units, designed to cater for occupants with limited mobility. Each dwelling will have built-in personal alarms connected to a 24-hour call centre.*

*The layout will provide communal garden space for residents to use, individual gardens will be small and easily maintainable.*

### **POLICY - SITE 8 (SONNING GOLF CLUB)**

*If this site is retained by WBC in the final Local Plan Update it will be developed in an environmentally sensitive way for 24 family homes. One half (12 units) are to be 3 bedroom houses, 6 units each are to be 2 bedroom and 4 bedroom respectively. All houses to be 2 storey units in order to ensure a rural character.*

*All houses are to be designed to a high standard consistent with the open countryside character of the area, streets are to be tree lined, houses to have substantial gardens and the houses are to be equipped with solar panels and EV sockets for charging electric vehicles.*

## Key Issues – Conservation Area

Most residents valued the historical Conservation Area highly in their responses to the questionnaire. The boundaries will be reviewed during the currency of the impending Local Plan Update so that it remains relevant. The following Vision, Objectives and Policies are included in the draft Plan:

### **VISION – Conservation Area**

*That the unique historical centre of Sonning should be preserved or enhanced, consideration should be given at the next Conservation Area Appraisal to enlarging the area to include areas that fit the definition.*

### **OBJECTIVE – Conservation Area**

*To protect the historic central conservation area and ensure that the surrounding settlements continue to reflect the semi-rural nature of the village.*

### **POLICY – Conservation Area**

*No new housing, other than in very limited circumstances, will be built in the Sonning Conservation Area.*

## Key Issues - Infrastructure

- ◇ The pollution and disruption caused by through traffic was the biggest negative issue highlighted by residents in their responses to the questionnaire.
- ◇ Monitoring of traffic speeds is to be continued in order to control excessive speeding
- ◇ The lack of central parking is recognised, the Plan recommends that new housing has adequate provision for off-street parking and that parking on footpaths is discouraged.

## Key Issues – Local Environment

Recognising the almost universal response that the preservation and protection of the local environment is one of the most important factors to residents, policies are included in the Plan to address the following Objectives:

- ◇ Maintain and enhance the air quality and cleanliness of the Parish.
- ◇ Protect and improve our green spaces and biodiverse wildlife habitats.
- ◇ Retain the natural views and visual landscapes afforded to the residents and visitors, and protect our trees and hedgerows.
- ◇ Maintain and develop pedestrian access paths across the parish including those to, and along, the River Thames.
- ◇ Improve the parish access for vehicle free movement.
- ◇ Generate a sustainable reduction of the impact of traffic pollution, including air quality, and noise, within the Parish.

## Key Issues – Local Social and Community Facilities

Responses from residents regarding local facilities indicated a broad level of satisfaction. Given the apparent general level of satisfaction no policies have been included so far in the draft.

## Key Issues – CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

Sonning residents suggested that CIL money should be used as follows:

- ◇ Traffic calming schemes (56%)
- ◇ Schemes to improve Sonning pavements for walkers and disabled accessibility (43%)
- ◇ Roads and drainage (32% each)
- ◇ Speed cameras (31%)
- ◇ Road improvements for cyclists and better Broadband services (30% each)

These priorities broadly reflect the opinions expressed in earlier sections of this Plan.

## Key Issues – Monitoring & Evaluation

The Plan will be reviewed every five years throughout the plan period. Review of policies will be managed by Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society. The purpose of review will be primarily to assess the extent to which the objectives have been achieved in practice and the contribution of the policies contained within it towards meeting those objectives; and secondly to rectify any errors and omissions.

**The Draft Sonning Neighbourhood Plan can be accessed from our website [sonning.info](http://sonning.info) where you can ask questions about the proposals and let us know your thoughts.**



## Appendix: 6

**Subject:** RE: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

**From:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Date:** 20/10/2022, 08:39

**To:** Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>, Michael Hart <[REDACTED]>

**CC:** Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Patrick Hamblin

<[REDACTED]>, Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

Good morning all,

Thank you once again for sharing with us the first draft of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan. As promised, a version with some detailed comments from ourselves is attached.

A key area to highlight, as we discussed, is around the timetable. Currently this refers to submission to WBC and progression straight to examination. However, following submission to WBC, we will need to carry out a further 6 week consultation in accordance with the regulations. This is known as the Regulation 16 consultation. We will need to get a decision of the council's Executive to carry out this consultation, which typically has around a 2 month lead in time which will also need to be factored in. We will do everything we can to streamline this (and potentially start the initial stages of the Executive process slightly in advance of the formal submission), but unfortunately we're ultimately governed by the procedures and lead in times in our constitution.

So in short, it won't be possible to proceed straight from submission to examination – in reality there will be a minimum of 3 / 4 months in between those two stages. Likewise, subsequent stages of considering the examiner's recommendations and making the decision to proceed to referendum would also require a decision of Executive and similar couple of months lead in. Again, we will do all we can to expedite this process but it's important to manage expectations that adoption of the plan is unlikely to happen within the next 12 months as currently envisaged.

Our [Statement of Community Involvement](#) sets out an overview of neighbourhood planning and outlines the broad steps involved.

Another main area, as discussed at the meeting, is ensuring policies cover genuine land use planning matters and are distinct from wider community aspirations which sit outside of specific planning policy. The latter are often valuable areas for the neighbourhood plan to acknowledge, but are actions that will be achieved outside of the plan making process. A good recent example of a plan that has identified community projects is the [Whitburn Neighbourhood Plan](#) that was adopted last month.

To assist with policy writing, Locality offer a useful [guide on policy writing](#) which we'd recommend having a read of. Some of the current policies will need to be reconsidered and there's potential to combine and rework some of them so they function as land use policies. We'd be happy to review and advise on updated drafts as and when they are ready.

With regards to policies, we discussed how requirements within policies will need to be sufficiently evidenced and discussed how other groups within the borough had utilised technical support from Locality for Housing Need Assessments. Further information on this is available here: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>. Linked to this is the [Local Housing Need Assessment \(2019\)](#) produced in support of the Draft LPU in 2020 which looks at housing needs at the borough level which may provide a useful starting point. As mentioned, this is in the process of being updated and we will share this with you when able.

It's also useful to note that Locality offer basic grant funding as well, details of which is here: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/>.

We also talked about the need to undertake SEA/HRA screening. I've attached a couple of the most recent examples of this from within the borough which you can adapt to prepare a screening statement once you've considered the comments on the plan. As advised, there would need to be a separate SEA / HRA screening consultation with the 3 statutory bodies (Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency) for 5 weeks. This

will be run by WBC. In terms of timing, SEA / HRA screening should take place as early as possible so that it informs the plan making process. This could be alongside the Regulation 14 pre-submission draft consultation. However, if the plan changes significantly as a result of feedback from that consultation, there may need to be further screening consultation. I've previously shared some helpful guidance from Locality on this process.

Regarding Local Green Space (LGS), we also discussed that any designations would need to be sufficiently justified against the requirements in the NPPF and planning practice guidance. We would recommend that if you choose to including LGS within the plan that a supporting topic paper be prepared along similar lines to that produced by WBC for its most recent consultation. See [LGS Topic Paper covering report](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/revised-growth-strategy-consultation/?categoryesct191f252ff-550d-4cfa-a838-92ef2cb5f83c=10784) and detailed appendices assessing each site are available from the following page: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/revised-growth-strategy-consultation/?categoryesct191f252ff-550d-4cfa-a838-92ef2cb5f83c=10784>.

Another action was to share a link to our Policies Map detailing the development limits (the technical term for settlement boundaries). This is available here: <https://www.planvu.co.uk/wbc/>. Within Sonning Parish you have the limited development location of Sonning itself, and part of Woodley major development location.

If there is anything I have missed, then do please let me know. As mentioned, I will be on leave from 24<sup>th</sup> October to 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Ian Church will be able to answer any queries you may have while I am away.

Kind regards,

**James McCabe** (He, him, his)  
Principal Planning Policy Officer | Growth & Delivery  
Wokingham Borough Council  
[REDACTED] | [REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk

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Attachments:

Draft v2 - WBC comments Oct 2022.pdf	1.4 MB
SEA & HRA Provisional draft Screening Opinion - Draft Twyford NDP (Mar 2022).docx	65.4 kB
SEA & HRA Provisional draft Screening Opinion - Draft Ruscombe NDP.docx	56.0 kB

**Subject:** Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

**From:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Date:** 31/03/2023, 12:45

**To:** mikehart1311 Hart <[REDACTED]>, Trefor Fisher

<[REDACTED]>, Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>, Patrick Hamblin

<[REDACTED]>, Lesley Bates <[REDACTED]>

**CC:** Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

Good morning all,

Thanks once again for your time the other week to discuss progress with the plan. Please find attached our comments and suggestions. Apologies that I'm providing our comments later than anticipated.

As mentioned when we met, I converted the plan into Word for ease of commenting and making suggestions as tracked changes, which has unfortunately meant some of the formatting has gone awry in places. Hopefully the comments are clear and it would be a simple case of using your chosen software to update the plan as appropriate. I should also flag, that due to the size of the document I have deleted some of the decorative images purely so that the file is of a size that can be shared via email. However, please do retain these in your working version of the plan as they add good visual interest to the document.

As discussed, a key aspect will be ensuring policies are clear and precise as required by national policy and guidance and also that requirements are justified by appropriate evidence. We've made specific comments to this effect, in some cases suggesting example text and in others posing some questions for you to consider. There are areas that provide a really good starting point, that simply need some finessing to ensure they read as land use policies and so that they work to achieve their desired effect. Other areas make specific requirements of developments without the underpinning evidence needed to justify the proposed approach. It is therefore worthwhile considering how further justification can be provided, including the use of Locality technical support for evidence like Housing Need Assessments (see here: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>)

As we discussed, there is a lot of very useful detail contained within the Village Design Statement that has been referenced in the plan where we believe you can go further and incorporate relevant aspects into a specific policy or policies. This would give the design guidance additional weight by incorporating it into policy that will ultimately form part of the statutory development plan.

We've given some more thought to the transport section and have provided links within our comments to the document to resources and other examples. As discussed, it's a tricky balance between reflecting the local aspirations for the Third Thames Crossing and recognising its strategic scope is beyond the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan and that delivery would be outside the neighbourhood area if it were to come forward. This is likely an issue where a health check could provide real value, given an individual who has examined multiple plans is likely to have addressed similar matters elsewhere.

Another key thing to bear in mind is that there is no need to replicate policies which already exist at a local or national level. Policies should only be included where they add particular value through local interpretation or nuance. We've made comments to this effect on ways that this may be achieved for particular policies.

Finally, as discussed, I just wanted to confirm that post Easter we will be in a position to draft the SEA/HRA Screening Statement and consult on this as required. I'll keep you informed on the progress of this. But as the policy areas and scope are largely understood, we have sufficient information to begin the first stage of that process.

Kind Regards,

*James*

James McCabe (He, him, his)

Principal Planning Policy Officer  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Email: [REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk  
Telephone: [REDACTED]

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#### Attachments:

Draft\_v2.23 - WBC comments.docx

19.1 MB



## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning

February 2024

Dear Land Interest,

### Sonning Neighbourhood Plan: Call for Sites

Sonning Parish Council is in the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan for Sonning to cover the period to 2040. It has been provided with an 'indicative housing figure' by the local planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), and so the plan may include proposals which allocate land for some housing development.

The Council has formed a Steering Group to lead the project and the group has decided to issue a 'Call for Sites' to inform it of the availability of land that may qualify for allocation. Land that may qualify for allocation at this stage is informed by national and strategic policies, as well as community engagement work undertaken to date, and is therefore limited to:

- A. Land that lies within, or immediately adjacent to, the existing built-up area boundary of Sonning (see yellow highlight on map attached); and
- B. Land which is no larger than 1 hectare.

A preference for schemes which maximise their affordable housing offer has also been established.

If you have an interest in such land (as either owner or developer), you are invited to submit the following information:

1. A plan showing the extent of land in your control that you wish to make available in the plan period;
2. The expected number of units, making clear the number of open market and affordable units anticipated, and anticipated timescales for the proposed development;
3. Confirmation that there are no legal encumbrances on developing the land;
4. Information of any viability issues that we may need to be aware of in making our site selection decisions; and
5. Any other relevant supplementary information that may assist the group in assessing the land for potential allocation.

Contact us at [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info)



## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning

The group will be guided by community engagement work to assess the suitability of the land for development, alongside a Strategic Environmental Assessment, which will be undertaken independently, to inform site selection preferences.

Please note that the group will not be arranging meetings with land interests prior to deciding its preferences and so it is important the information provided now is clear. Please also note that this exercise will update the last 'Call for Sites' information undertaken by WBC in Autumn 2021. If you responded then, and your land remains available, you must respond to this new invitation.

Once the preferred list of sites has been decided, the group may wish to liaise with the relevant land interests to agree the key development principles to be included in the site allocation policy and any further technical evidence required to be provided by the land interest to support a potential allocation.

The Steering Group requires your information to be received by Friday 1st March 2024. Please send your information to Trefor Fisher, Chairman SPC by email to [trefor.fisher@sonning-pc.gov.uk](mailto:trefor.fisher@sonning-pc.gov.uk) using the subject title 'NP Call for Sites'.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group



Trefor Fisher  
Chairman of Sonning Parish Council



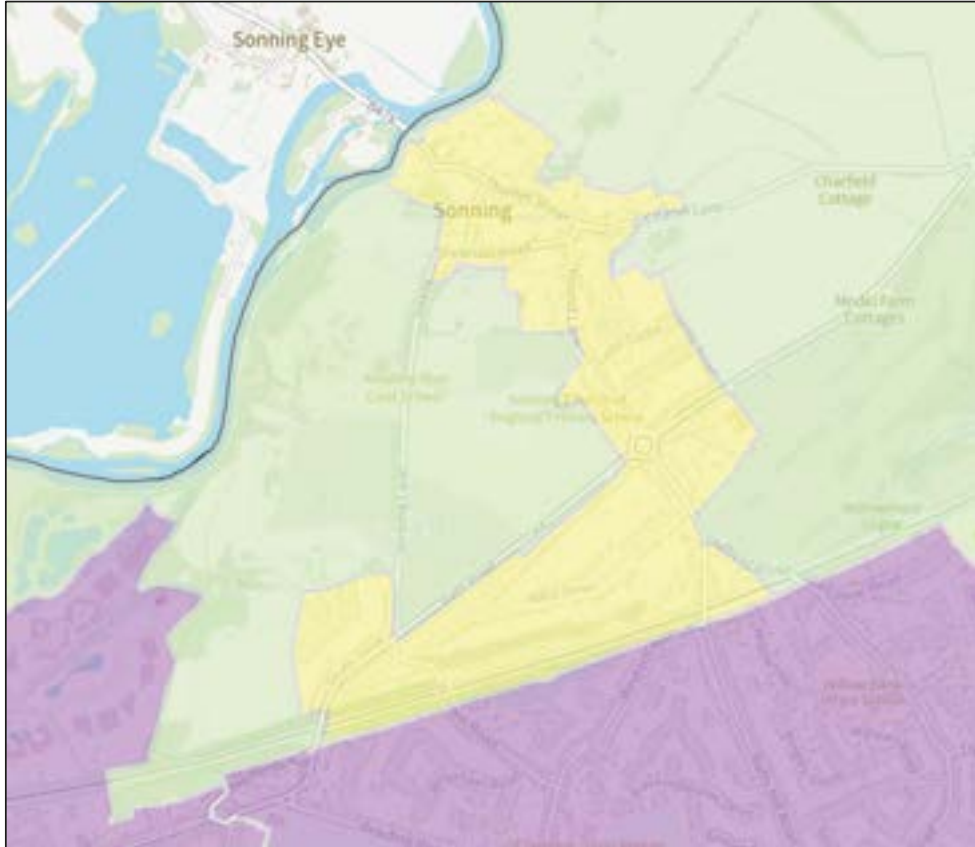
Mike Hart  
Chairman of Sonning & Sonning Eye Society



Contact us at [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info)



## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning



Source: Extract of WBC's Online Interactive Map – the built-up area boundary of Sonning shown in yellow highlight

Contact us at [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info)



## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning

February 2024

Dear Resident of Sonning,

### Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Update and Call For Sites

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (comprising members from Sonning Parish Council, the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society and other members of the community) were intending to submit the draft Sonning Neighbourhood Plan for public consultation in the first quarter of 2024 but a new version of the Government National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in December 2023 has caused us to reconsider our approach.

The new NPPF offers neighbourhoods protection against unwanted developments for a period of 5 years if they allocate an additional site in their Neighbourhood Plan to meet its identified housing requirement. The Steering Group has obtained an indicative housing requirement from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) covering the period of the Plan (2024 – 2040) of 98 houses that includes the 50 houses on Sonning Golf Club recently approved by WBC, the 25 houses on Reading University Farm (next to Glebe Gardens) that are in WBC's Local Plan and an unspecified "windfall" number of 23 further houses. The Steering Group now intend to identify a small site or sites for a limited number of further houses that would give the protection offered in the new version of the NPPF. If no acceptable site is found we would proceed with the Plan as before, without allocating any additional sites.

A copy of the "Call for Sites" can be seen on our Neighbourhood Plan website [www.sonning.info](http://www.sonning.info). Only sites of less than 1 hectare (approx. 2.5 acres) and that are within or adjacent to Sonning's built-up area will be considered.

The Steering Group will be advised on the site identification process by O'Neill Homer, the consultants retained to advise us on the Neighbourhood Plan. Sonning residents will be informed of the outcome of the process and given the opportunity to comment if and when potential sites have been identified and assessed. Progress on the identification of sites and their appraisal will be updated on the above website.

  
Trevor Fisher  
Chairman of  
Sonning Parish Council



  
Mike Hart  
Chairman of  
Sonning & Sonning Eye Society



Contact us: [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info)

## Appendix: 10

**Subject:** RE: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan catch up  
**From:** Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>  
**Date:** 24/10/2024, 11:59  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>, Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Nigel Borshell <[REDACTED]>, Matthew Jennings <[REDACTED]@oneillhomer.co.uk>  
**CC:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

Dear all,

Further to our meeting earlier this week, there are a few documents and links below that may assist.

The Finchampstead NP gaps report and examiner's report are available [here](#) and here: [Examiner Report](#)

In terms of the Wharf area of LGS, a colleague who has prepared the assessment of LGS for the Local Plan Update has made a few comments and suggestions:

- Reference could be added to the Public Right of Way that runs through the site
- It's helpful to refer to the size of the site, for example to note that it is a modest area of green space bound by the River Thames, and Sonning Bridge.
- Is there information from the Sonning Parish Design Statement (2004) that can be drawn upon?
- The Valued Landscape Assessment for the River Thames could also be referred to. It recognises that other towns and villages within and adjacent to the valued landscape grew up on higher ground near wharves and river crossings for trade and security. It's available here: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2024-09/Valued%20Landscape%20Assessment%20September%202024%20%28reduced%29.pdf>

The highways data I referred to is available here: <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/#6/55.254/-6.053/basemap-regions-countpoints>

We've also considered how policy TRA1 could be recast, but hopefully in a way that still meets your objectives. Some proposed draft wording is set out below:

*Development proposals should maintain, and preferably enhance, road safety for all users and maximise opportunities to alleviate traffic congestion. Development proposals should deliver or contribute towards measures to mitigate the impact on the highway network, such as through traffic calming measures and active travel improvements.*

*Development proposals should take particular account of:*

- *The ability to share all transport infrastructure between all road users; and*
- *Locations where the existing road system is constrained, with priority given to the Traffic Calming Key Locations identified on the [Policies Map](#)*

*Mitigation measures to improve road safety should avoid the introduction of urbanising features, and minimise the other impacts such as noise.*

You'll have no doubt already guessed that as I'm responding rather than James, the new addition to the McCabe household arrived safely earlier this week and all are well. So for the next couple of weeks if you have any queries, or updates then please contact me in the first instance.

Kind regards,

Ian

**Ian Church**

Local Plan Manager

Wokingham Borough Council

Email: [REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** 20 October 2024 15:29

**To:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>; Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>; Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>; Nigel Borshell <[REDACTED]>; Matthew Jennings <[REDACTED]>; Ian Church <[REDACTED]h@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Ben Davis <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Sonning Neighbourhood Plan catch up

**External Email**

**CAUTION: This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL - STOP & THINK before clicking a link or opening attachments.**

Dear James, Ian and Matt,

We have been through the WBC comments and the ONH responses and have made some changes in the attached draft leaving a few issues that we need to discuss in our Teams meeting tomorrow. From our side these are mainly to do with Green gaps and Active transport.

Mike

---

**From:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Sent:** Monday, October 14, 2024 1:29 PM

**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>; Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>; Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>; Nigel Borshell <[REDACTED]>; Matthew Jennings <[REDACTED]@oneilhomer.co.uk>; Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Ben Davis <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Sonning Neighbourhood Plan catch up

**When:** Monday, October 21, 2024 2:00 PM-3:30 PM.

**Where:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

Afternoon all,

A meeting to discuss the latest draft of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan as per separate correspondence.

Kind regards,

James

---

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---

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## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) has been developed by the Sonning Parish Council, the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society, local volunteers and external consultants to set out the vision, objectives and resulting policies for the Parish of Sonning until 2040. It is consistent with the Government's current approach to planning which is intended to involve local communities more directly in planning decisions that affect them.

We asked you for your views in April 2021 when a questionnaire, delivered to every home in the parish, resulted in responses from 53% of households. In addition an informal consultation process occurred in October/November 2022.

You told us your main concerns about living in Sonning and we have tried to address them in our Plan...

- » the importance of **protecting the environment** that surrounds us:

The SNP focuses on protecting and enhancing our open spaces and encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place. This includes features such as footpaths, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds, and streams which all go towards defining Sonning Parish. Local Gaps are proposed to ensure the separation between Sonning & Charvil and between Holme Park Farm & Earley. Three new Green Spaces are proposed: King George's Field, the Wharf and Ali's Pond. These are defined in policies SNP/ENV1 and SNP/ENV2.

- » the need for new housing, particularly **affordable and housing for the elderly**:

The housing needs over the period of the SNP (up to 2040) should be satisfied by outline or detailed planning applications that have already been approved by Wokingham Borough Council plus a small allowance for windfall and flexibility. This means a total of 167 new dwellings are forecast to be built over the Plan period, 63 units on Sonning Golf Course, 25 units on Bull Close and 67 flats on Old Bath Road. They will be designed and built in such a way as to maintain the character of the village and protect its rich natural environment. These requirements are spelled out in policies SNP/HOU1 and SNP/HOU2.

- » the **negative impact of through traffic**:

**Traffic Calming Initiatives:** Development proposals should maintain, and preferably enhance, road safety for all users and maximise opportunities to alleviate traffic congestion. Development proposals should deliver or contribute towards measures to mitigate the impact on the highway network, such as through traffic calming measures and active travel improvements. See policies SNP/TRA1 and SNP/TRA2.

**NEXT STEPS** Between 30<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 the "Regulation 14" consultation allows local residents, businesses and statutory consultees the chance to review the draft SNP. You are invited to download the draft SNP here: <https://sonning.info/snp/reg14> - a printed version is available for examination by appointment with Lesley Bates (clerk@sonning-pc.gov.uk or 0118 969 7753). We will be available to answer your questions in the Pearson Hall between noon and 4pm on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June or do email us.

The SNP, amended as appropriate following the Reg 14 consultation, will be submitted formally to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) who arrange for its review by an Independent Examiner. The final SNP will go through a referendum by Sonning residents, if approved it will be adopted by WBC as a part of their local plan.



**Important Update About  
Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning**

**Subject:** RE: Local Gap

**From:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>

**Date:** 04/08/2025, 16:48

**To:** Mike <[REDACTED]>

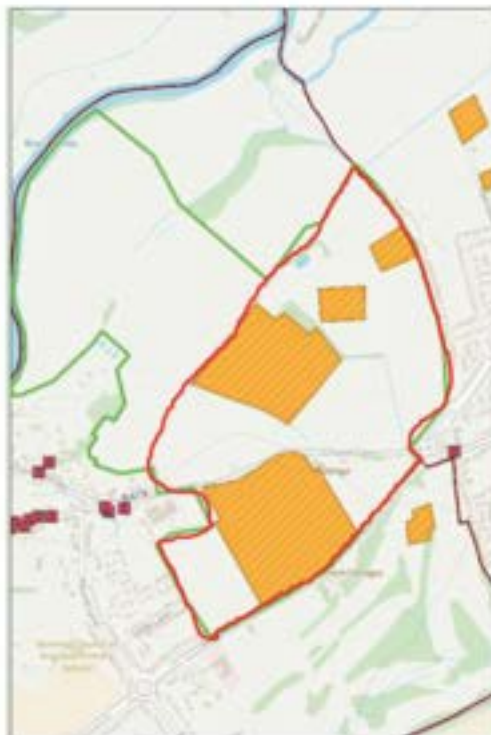
**CC:** Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>, Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Nigel Borshell <[REDACTED]>, '[REDACTED]' <[REDACTED]>, Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>, Lesley J Heaney <[REDACTED]>, '[REDACTED]' <[REDACTED]>, Matthew Jennings <[REDACTED]@oneillhomer.co.uk>

Hi Mike,

Thanks for your email and thanks again for your time on Friday.

As promised, please find attached some comments on the Gap Study. By way of clarity, we're not suggesting that the study needs to be updated to reflect our comments. The comments simply reflect our view that it would be more appropriate for the Sonning / Charvil gap to be more focussed. As Matthew suggested, there may be merit in inviting comments from Briarwood on the extent of a revised gap, if you feel that would be helpful. However, we don't think it's necessary for the evidence base to be updated in order for the revisions we'd recommend to the boundary to be made, as such revisions are a legitimate course of action for plan makers to take upon reflection of all representations and the evidence base.

In terms of the specific extent of the Sonning / Charvil gap, our recommendation would be for this to comprise the two parcels between the Bath Road and Charvil Lane, and Charvil Lane and Broadmoor Lane as I've roughly plotted out in red below. In our opinion this is an area which reflects and is more focussed on the key characteristics and attributes referred to in the evidence, and can therefore be justified to the neighbourhood plan examiner.



Kind Regards,

James

James McCabe (He, him, his)

Principal Planning Policy Officer  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Email: [REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk  
Telephone: [REDACTED]

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---

**From:** Mike <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 04 August 2025 09:59  
**To:** James McCabe <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>; Ian Church <[REDACTED]@wokingham.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Jeremy Gilmore <[REDACTED]>; Trefor Fisher <[REDACTED]>; Nigel Borshell <[REDACTED]>; Lesley J Heaney <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]; Matthew Jennings <[REDACTED]@oneillhomer.co.uk>  
**Subject:** Local Gap

**WARNING!**

For the attention of  
WBC, Optalis, WHL, BCSolutions and  
Councillors

This mail is from an external sender - please do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust this sender, and know the content is safe

Dear James and Ian,

Many thanks for your time last Friday and for your supportive comments.

The Steering group is in favour of reducing the extent of the Sonning/Charvil local gap by eliminating the area in the flood plain. Is the attached along the lines that you had in mind?

Best regards,

Mike

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

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---

— Attachments: —

WBC comments on Gap Study.docx

33.2 kB

## Statutory and non-statutory consultees including stakeholder, local businesses and organisations:

[REDACTED]@woking.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@thameswater.co.uk  
 [REDACTED]@buckinghamshire.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@amec.com  
 [REDACTED]@swallowfieldpc.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@nationalgrid.com  
 [REDACTED]@wiltshire.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@historicengland.org.uk  
 [REDACTED]@btinternet.com  
 [REDACTED]@basingstoke.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@waverley.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@nhs.net  
 [REDACTED]@nhs.net  
 [REDACTED]@rbwm.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@southeastwater.co.uk  
 [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk  
 [REDACTED]@winnersh.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@eyedunsden.org  
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 [REDACTED]@orr.gsi.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@westberks.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@historicengland.org.uk  
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 [REDACTED]@oxfordshire.gov.uk  
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 [REDACTED]@twyfordparishcouncil.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@rbwm.gov.uk  
 planning.policy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk  
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 [REDACTED]@rbwm.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@swindon.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@hants.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@mod.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@orr.gov.uk  
 [REDACTED]@hca.gsi.gov.uk  
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 [REDACTED]@highwaysengland.co.uk  
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 n.grid@amec.com  
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development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk  
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planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk  
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██████████@remenhamparish.org.uk  
info@thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk  
ldf@southbucks.gov.uk  
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townplanningpolicy@thameswater.co.uk  
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# bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

## SONNING NEEDS YOU!

Mike Hart, Chairman

Representatives from Sonning Parish Council and the Society met James McCabe, a senior planning officer, and his team at Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) at the end of September to inform them of the intention to draft a Sonning Neighbourhood Development Plan (SNDP). WBC assured us that they would support this initiative and provide assistance. They also confirmed that there is Basic Grant Funding to contribute towards the associated costs.

Whilst this initiative relates only to Sonning, the Eye & Dunsden Parish Council has also committed to preparing a separate NDP therefore our two communities will be embarking on parallel courses.



As mentioned in the last issue of *Bridge* the SNDP is the best tool we have to combat the worst excesses of unwanted development, particularly in view of the Local Plan Update. It gives us an equal voice in determining where and what form any development should take. Without it we will have minimal control over the future design of our neighbourhood.

The next step is to kick off the SNDP in a

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
to be held in  
Pearson Hall  
at 7.30pm on  
Tuesday 18th February

Members of the interim joint SNDP steering committee, drawn from SPC and the Society, will address the meeting, the objectives of which are as follows:

- To inform the residents of Sonning what is involved in a Neighbourhood Plan and why it is important for Sonning to have one
- To explain how the SNDP must tie in with WBC's Local Plan and to summarise what is included in the Local Plan Update, now in its consultation phase
- To outline a schedule for drafting the SNDP
- To pinpoint critical aspects which need to be addressed
- To seek comments from residents
- To seek volunteers to join the SNDP committee in order that it is fully representative of all Sonning residents, organisations (including schools) and businesses.

This last point is most important. We should not underestimate the amount of work that will be required and although we have a nucleus of people keen to see this through we will need help from the community.

We will have a complex document to put together. This can only be produced following surveys of the residents and businesses as well as discussions with as many locals as possible. All to ensure that we take everybody's views into consideration. We're eager to encourage residents to get involved but particularly any people with architectural skills or experience with planning policies.

Flyers will be delivered to all residents prior to the meeting with more information on the timing and agenda for the meeting.



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Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

## Sonning Developments

Jeremy Gilmore, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

I know. No important surveys for ages and now two in quick succession: The 2021 Census and, more importantly for residents, the Questionnaire for our Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (SNP).



By the time you read this you will have dealt with the census so now you can concentrate fully on helping to decide what is best for the future of Sonning.

We are hoping that a paper copy will be delivered to your door in April although you will also be able to complete it by going online to [sonning.info/snp](http://sonning.info/snp).

I have no doubt that I am preaching to the choir if I remind you how important it is that as many people as possible complete this questionnaire. We'd like to know the views of every Sonning resident, be they *Nimbys* or *Builders* or everyone in-between.

I'm sure we all accept that there has to be a certain amount of new

housing in our future but at least if we have a Plan in place we can decide what form that will take. Be it starter homes or high priced 'retirement' flats!

Contrary to some views we still live in a democracy and every resident's opinion will be taken into consideration as we start drawing up the plans.

We also need to be aware that, with the withdrawal of plans for the garden town at Grazeley, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) are revising their Local Plan Update (LPU). Development sites that had been discounted in 2019 are very much back on the table, plus a few more.

Back in 2019 when the LPU was in the news, various emails went out asking residents to give WBC their views. People were asked to go to the website and answer a few questions. I was surprised to see that there were only ten responses from the residents of Sonning:

Parish	#Responses	% of Total
Charvil	184	32.5
Earley	15	2.7
Sonning	10	1.8
Twyford	48	8.5
Woodley	14	2.5

Part of a Table from 'WBC's Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 - Report on Initial Consultation Outcomes' showing some of the responses to the Local Plan Update consultation by parish.

Does this mean that everyone in Sonning is quite happy for WBC

to choose where to place any new developments? Charvil, who were concerned about the farmland in their area being turned into a housing estate, produced 184 responses. Not all of their responses disagreed with the proposal - so it's wrong to say that this type of consultation is only for *Nimbys* - but at least people gave an opinion.

Sonning residents missed the opportunity to make their views known. Charvil residents were better mobilised to respond probably because of the extensive development that was being proposed in their parish compared with the relatively small amount in Sonning. But things change and we may be next in the firing line.

So when it comes to the SNP Questionnaire, and also the second round of the LPU consultation from WBC, please please take a democratic moment and make your voice heard.

Ok, rant over. My apologies to all those of you who do voice your opinions. I'm merely a newcomer to Sonning (we moved here only 16 years ago) but I do kinda like the village and want to try and ensure that it develops in a way that is best for those of us on this side of the Thames and our neighbours in Sonning Eye.

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Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

## Have Your Say!

Mike Hart, Chairman

The first draft of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan is now ready for review by residents. A snapshot of the Plan, displayed on three posters at the Village Show held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, attracted quite a bit of interest.

One of the posters set out the following timeline for the Plan:



**NP  
Sonning**

### What is the status of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan (Plan)?

2019 October	Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) approval for the Plan to proceed
2020 February	Public meeting in Pearson Hall - more than 100 residents attended
2021 May	Questionnaire closed - 53% of households had responded
2021 May	Draft Plan prepared
2022 August	
2022 September	Sonning Show - informal consultation on the draft Plan
2022 October	Maildrop to all Sonning residents with summary of the Plan and link to online draft
2022 November	SNP Steering Group Open Day in Pearson Hall for feedback and questions on the Plan
2023 Q1	WBC consultation on Local Plan - this will allow us to finalize the draft Plan
2023 Q2	Submit final draft of the Plan to WBC
2023 Q3 or Q4	Public Referendum
2024	Sonning Neighbourhood Plan adopted

According to this timeline, the next two stages provide you, the Sonning residents, with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Plan. (Sonning Eye residents have their own plan underway under the auspices of the Parish of Eye & Dunsden.)

Every household in Sonning will receive a brief summary of the Plan through their doors in October. The mail drop will include a link to the full document and explain how residents can comment on the draft Plan. There will be an open day in Pearson Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> November at which residents can ask questions of members of the Steering Group and this event will also provide the Steering Group with a forum for the receipt of comments.

*Remember that this is your opportunity to help shape the future of your village, please take the time to have your say!*

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## >>Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

Readers of this column may have been understandably confused when they received the Neighbourhood Plan Update (re-printed on the opposite page) regarding a call for additional sites. The Society and Sonning Parish Council have been adamantly opposed to the extensive developments on Sonning Golf Course and elsewhere, why have we now invited developers to propose even more sites?

As explained in the update, the rules of the planning game have recently changed with the publication by the Government of a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework. This revision includes (in paragraph 14) the offer of protection against unwanted development if a neighbourhood includes a new allocated site

in its neighbourhood plan. For this reason the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan steering group decided it was worthwhile issuing a call for sites to see if a suitable site could be identified which could offer this protection.

We don't know if any suitable sites will be proposed that meet the stated criteria:

- Less than 1 hectare (roughly 2.5 acres) in size
- Within or immediately adjacent to Sonning's existing built-up area
- Maximising the potential for affordable housing

Landowners have only a couple of weeks to submit outline proposals so it will soon be known if there are any acceptable options. If there are potential sites they will be scrutinised and evaluated by the steering group, its consultants and Wokingham Borough Council. Only if they pass these hurdles would they be offered to residents for their opinion. As well as commenting on the location, residents would be asked what type of housing

should be built on the sites. The steering group would like it to be suitable for those with local connections, both starter homes for young families and for those wishing to downsize, in accordance with the wishes expressed by residents in their responses to the questionnaire back in May 2021. Affordability is a key issue that needs to be addressed in any new developments, in the opinion of the steering group we don't need any more 5 bedroom houses in Sonning.

If no suitable sites are identified in this process we will revert to the draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which didn't include any additional sites and proceed as before. We don't know whether the mere fact that we have been through the call for sites process without identifying a suitable site will help us oppose any future unwanted proposed development but we believe it's worth playing the game.

# Executive Committee & Panels

Patrick Hamblin, Planning & Traffic Panel

### Meetings & Planning Applications

There have been three meetings of the Panel since the last edition of *Bridge*. 14 applications were discussed. In addition, one application was recently discussed by email and comments for this application were sent to Wokingham Borough Council.

### Local Plan Update

A revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, HM Government in December 2023 but the Local Plan Update has not yet been finalised by Wokingham Borough Council.

### Traffic

The monitoring of traffic speeds continues to be conducted by the Community Speedwatch Team. During a recent Speedwatch in Charvil Lane, 88 offenders were logged in a two hour period, including one travelling at 52mph.

There have recently been two successful prosecutions following breaches of weight restrictions on Sonning Bridge. Both resulted in fines, costs and victim surcharges for the drivers.

### Quarry Extension

The Society is still working on issues relating to the quarry on behalf of Sonning Eye Action Group.

### Northern Parishes Councils Group

The Society continues to be represented at the quarterly meetings of the above, together with a representative of SPC. This is a discussion and information group of local Parish Councils in the areas adjacent to Sonning.

### Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

A separate article is provided on the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Sonning Parish Council Planning Committee meetings

The Panel has not been represented at the meetings of SPC, but there continues to be liaison normally after, but occasionally before, the meetings, where appropriate.





## Our Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning

February 2024

Dear Resident of Sonning,

### Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Update and Call For Sites

The Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (comprising members from Sonning Parish Council, the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society and other members of the community) were intending to submit the draft Sonning Neighbourhood Plan for public consultation in the first quarter of 2024 but a new version of the Government National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in December 2023 has caused us to reconsider our approach.

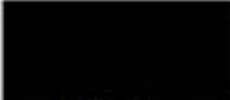
The new NPPF offers neighbourhoods protection against unwanted developments for a period of 5 years if they allocate an additional site in their Neighbourhood Plan to meet its identified housing requirement. The Steering Group has obtained an indicative housing requirement from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) covering the period of the Plan (2024 – 2040) of 98 houses that includes the 50 houses on Sonning Golf Club recently approved by WBC, the 25 houses on Reading University Farm (next to Glebe Gardens) that are in WBC's Local Plan and an unspecified "windfall" number of 23 further houses. The Steering Group now intend to identify a small site or sites for a limited number of further houses that would give the protection offered in the new version of the NPPF. If no acceptable site is found we would proceed with the Plan as before, without allocating any additional sites.

A copy of the "Call for Sites" can be seen on our Neighbourhood Plan website [www.sonning.info](http://www.sonning.info). Only sites of less than 1 hectare (approx. 2.5 acres) and that are within or adjacent to Sonning's built-up area will be considered.

The Steering Group will be advised on the site identification process by O'Neill Homer, the consultants retained to advise us on the Neighbourhood Plan. Sonning residents will be informed of the outcome of the process and given the opportunity to comment if and when potential sites have been identified and assessed. Progress on the identification of sites and their appraisal will be updated on the above website.

  
Trevor Fisher  
Chairman of  
Sonning Parish Council



  
Mike Hart  
Chairman of  
Sonning & Sonning Eye Society



Contact us: [hello@sonning.info](mailto:hello@sonning.info)



## >>Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

In the last issue of *Bridge* the “View from the Bridge” was all about how the Neighbourhood Plan steering group had decided to launch a “Call for Sites” to see if landowners would offer new sites that we could support that would give protection against unwanted developments under the new edition of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

We were disappointed at the poor response to our invitation. Most of the landowners approached didn’t even respond at all and the two submissions that we received either didn’t meet the criteria (a site of less than 1 hectare within the built-up area) or were too small to qualify as a new site that WBC would support in the context of the NPPF.

The steering group has therefore decided to abandon this approach and to proceed with finalising the

Neighbourhood Plan without allocating a new site. WBC have been very supportive of the draft plan so we feel that it will still help to combat unwanted development proposals, even if it doesn’t gain the protection that we had hoped for.

The consultants helping the steering group are AECOM and O’Neill Homer. AECOM have already submitted two of their reports, a Housing Needs Assessment and a Design Codes report, which have both added evidence to support the policies in our Neighbourhood Plan. The third AECOM report, commenting on the draft policies, is expected imminently. O’Neill Homer will review the overall draft and help us through the next stages. We are aiming to complete the draft by October at which stage it goes through a consultation process called Regulation 14, prior to an independent review and a local referendum where residents vote for or against the proposed Plan.

Meanwhile little seems to be happening on the 3 sites that have already been approved:

- the 13 houses on the Golf Course site located on the corner of Pound Lane and Duffield Road

- the 50 houses on the Golf Course practice area
- the 57 flats near the care home on Old Bath Road.

We understand from Reading University Estates that the application to develop the Bull Close site between Glebe Gardens and the University Farm will only be made once WBC finalises its Local Plan, which is probably at least a year away. So although a lot of new houses are in the pipeline it doesn’t look as if construction will start soon. This may be partly due to the reduced demand resulting from the cost of mortgages but the pressure won’t go away.

At the end of July the new government announced an 8 week consultation on further changes to the NPPF. Amongst the proposed changes are amendments to the algorithm that is used to calculate the number of new houses that each local authority must build and to make these targets mandatory. This is highly likely to mean that WBC’s 5 year housing land supply target will be increased further and that WBC will be looking for new potential sites across the district.

## Executive Committee & Panels

### Patrick Hamblin, Planning & Traffic Panel

#### Meetings & Planning Applications

Since the beginning of 2024 there have been four meetings of the Panel. A total of 17 applications were discussed, resulting in appropriate comments made to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) on three applications and comments to Oxfordshire County Council on one application.

#### Local Plan Update

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is being changed yet again with proposed revisions not out for consultation until end of September. If the proposed changes are made they will result in a 70% increase in the number of houses that

WBC will be forced to build. WBC has to respond to the consultation then update its Local Plan by 2026.

#### Traffic

The monitoring of traffic speeds continues to be conducted by the Community Speedwatch Team. Charvil Lane continues to be a particular problem area, with approximately 45% of traffic travelling more than 25mph in the 20mph area.

There has been a further small number of successful prosecutions following breaches of weight restrictions on Sonning Bridge, resulting in fines, costs and victim surcharges for the drivers.

#### Sonning Quarry Extension

The application by Tarmac for considerable extensions to the quarry was considered in great detail by both Sonning Eye Action Group (SEAG) and Eye & Dunsden Parish Council and very comprehensive objections/comments made to Oxfordshire County Council. Prof Ali Driver and Sonning Parish Council made additional detailed input. The Society confirmed its agreement to all the objections/comments made by others.

#### Holme Park Farm

This application relates to change of use of the Old Barn and Threshing Barn from agricultural use to storage





# bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

## Sonning Neighbourhood Plan goes out for consultation

Mike Hart, Chairman of Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

A key milestone in the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan process will be reached at the end of May when the draft plan goes out for public consultation. This process, called "Regulation 14", will give local residents and businesses, as well as many statutory organisations such as neighbouring councils and utilities, the opportunity over the period from 30<sup>th</sup> May to 18<sup>th</sup> July to review and comment on the draft plan.



A mail drop summarising the key issues covered by the plan and providing details of how to participate in the consultation process will be hand delivered to all Sonning residents and businesses at the end May. Emails will be sent out to statutory consultees and local organisations at the same time providing the web site address from which a copy of the draft plan can be downloaded. Hard copies to view will also be available from Lesley Bates, the Sonning Parish Council Clerk, by contacting her by email on [clerk@sonning-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@sonning-pc.gov.uk) or on telephone number 0118 969 7753. Copies will also be available to view at Woodley and Twyford Libraries. An open day will take place in the Pearson Hall committee room from noon to 4pm on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June when members of the Steering Group will be available to answer any questions.

Once the six week period is over in July, comments received will be reviewed and appropriate revisions made before the final draft plan is officially submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), the local planning authority. WBC take over the process at this point by publicising the plan (this is called "Regulation 16") and arranging for it to be reviewed by an independent examiner who ensures that it meets the basic conditions and legal requirements. Following any necessary modifications WBC will then arrange for a neighbourhood plan referendum to be carried out at which Sonning residents will be entitled to vote for its adoption. If the majority vote "yes" it will be adopted by WBC as an official document and will then become part of the statutory development plan for Sonning within the Wokingham area.



Appearing in your letterbox shortly

Bridge is the newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

email: [bridge@sonning.org.uk](mailto:bridge@sonning.org.uk)

web: [www.sonning.org.uk](http://www.sonning.org.uk)

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## **SONNING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW**

### **REGULATION 14 ANALYSIS NOTE OF STATUTORY BODY REPRESENTATIONS**

**September 2025**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This note summarises the representations made by the statutory bodies on the Pre-Submission version of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Review (SNP) during its recent 'Regulation 14' consultation period. It concludes by recommending main modifications to the SNP, and outstanding matters which need to be addressed, so that it may be submitted to the local planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), to arrange for its examination and referendum.

#### **2. Representations**

2.1 Representations have been received from:

1. WBC
2. Thames Water
3. Stantec (on behalf of the University of Reading)
4. Pro Vision (on behalf of Holme Park Farm Partnership)
5. Sport England
6. Avison Young (on behalf of Natural Gas Transmission)
7. Natural England

2.2 Adjoining Parishes were consulted but only Twyford Parish Council responded (with no comments).

2.3 Representations 5 - 7 raised no specific issues on the SNP

#### **3. Analysis**

##### WBC

3.1 Given the engagement that has already taken place between the Steering Group (SG) and WBC, and the resource constraints facing them, WBC decided not to formally respond to the SNP's Regulation 14 consultation. Instead, WBC offered an informal meeting with the SG, where they confirmed their general support for the Pre-Submission version of the SNP. There were, however, disagreements between the SG and WBC as to how the boundaries of the Local Gaps were defined. The method for defining the Local Gaps was evidenced in the report by Briarwood, the independent landscape consultant appointed by Sonning Parish Council to make recommendations on the local gaps, which is referenced in the SNP report.

3.2 Following the informal meeting, WBC provided some written comments on the Local Gap Report. These comments have been passed-on to the author of the report for further consideration. Beyond these, WBC had more fundamental concerns about the boundary of the Regulation 14 Charvil Local Gap (see Fig.1), specifically, its size. WBC expressed no concerns in relation to the boundary of the smaller Local Gap to the west of the parish.

Figure 1: Regulation 14 Local Gaps (grey hatching)

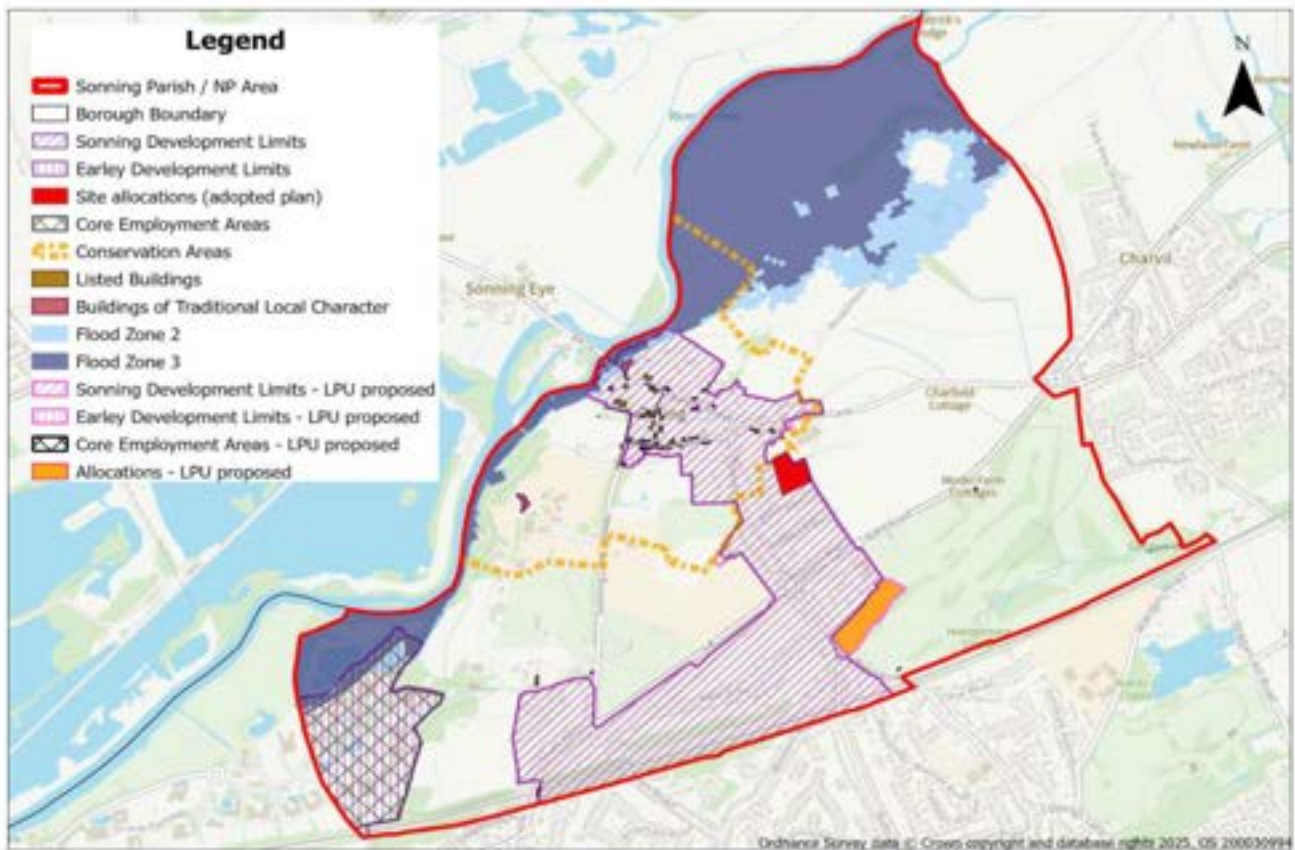


Figure 3: WBC Map Showing Flood Risk in the Parish



Figure 2: WBC Recommended Charvil Local Gap Boundary

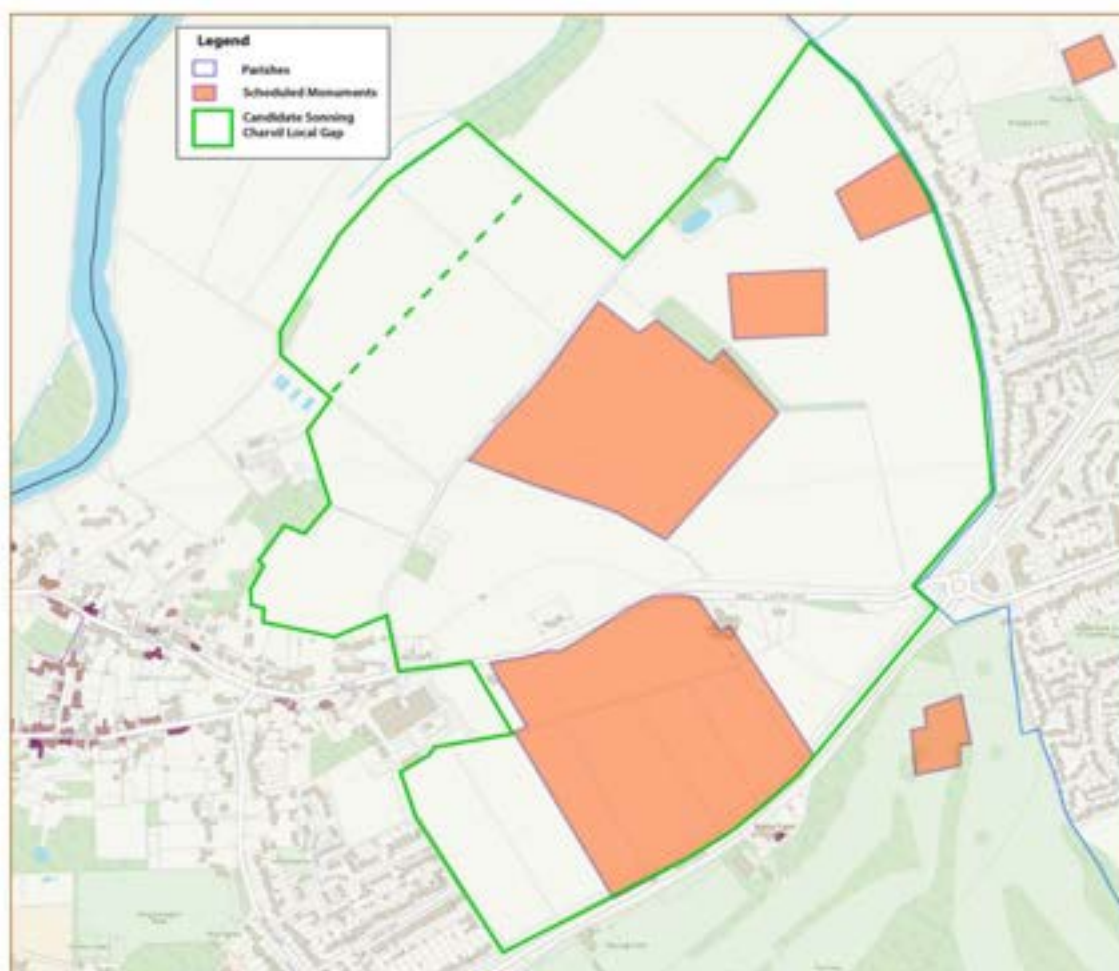


Figure 4: Regulation 15 Charvil Local Gap (solid green line)

3.3 WBC suggested that the northern part of the Charvil (eastern) Local Gap which falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3 (see Fig.2), was excluded. WBC recommended moving the northern boundary down to Broadmoor Lane, protecting the 'triangle of land' between Broadmoor Lane, Charvil Lane and Charvil itself (see Fig.3). WBC consider this to be the parcel of land which is most sensitive to causing visual coalescence between Sonning and Charvil.

3.4 After much consideration, the SG decided to reduce the size of the Charvil Local Gap, but not to that extent that WBC had proposed. The northern part of the Local Gap which sat entirely within Flood Zone 3, was removed. However, the land north of Broadmoor Lane which does not fall within Flood Zone 2 or 3, is still considered to be sensitive and the development of which could contribute to the visual coalescence of Sonning and Charvil, as demonstrated in the Briarwood report. Therefore, the SG intends to proceed to the Regulation 15 submission stage with the boundary of Charvil Local Gap defined as that shown on Fig.4.

#### Thames Water

3.5 The Thames Water submission was referenced as South Oxfordshire District –Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Consultation. It is assumed that this is an administrative error and their submission is considered applicable.

3.6 Thames Water have proposed that a new water/wastewater policy is included in the SNP. While the SNP is supportive of addressing this issue, WBC are directly addressing this matter through Policy C8 'Utilities' of the emerging Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan is currently at the

examination stage, so the SNP has decided to defer to the emerging Local Plan update policy, in anticipation of the of it being adopted next year.

3.7 Thames Water have proposed that a new water efficiency policy is included in the SNP. The limit of 105 litres/person/day which had been recommended in Thames Water is reflected in emerging Local Plan Policy CE3 'Environmental standards for residential development'. For the same reasons as above, the SNP will defer to the emerging Local Plan on this matter.

3.8 Thames Water has requested that the following text is included in the SNP: "It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding." This is not a policy that should apply parish by parish, it is a borough-wide matter that should be incorporated in the WBC Local Plan or at national level and we therefore defer to a higher level plan for its incorporation.

#### Stantec (on behalf of the University of Reading)

3.9 The University has made a number of comments in relation to HOU1 which seeks to deliver genuinely affordable homes, recognising the issues around affordability in the parish. The University raised comments about the weight apportioned in Clause A of the policy. The SNP stands by the 'significant' aspect of the weight attached due to the evidence in the Housing Needs Assessment of the need for more affordable housing in a parish where the median house price is almost £750,000. As such, housing considered 'affordable' in the technical, planning sense, will still not be affordable in real terms.

3.10 The SG agrees with the University's recommendation to Clause B that Almshouses 'could' be included, rather than 'should'. For Clause B to read more clearly, it should be amended to remove reference to Policy HOU2 as follows: 'The residential scheme at the Bull Close site, as shown on the Policies Map (Chapter 11), could include Almshouses'. By changing 'should' to 'could', the policy is not stating that a 100% affordable housing has to come forward on the site, but if it does, this is the policy provision for doing so.

3.11 On Clause C, the University state they do not consider the policy to be in accordance with the strategic policies in the development plan or national policy. It is important to note that when considering general conformity, this is not done on a policy-by-policy basis, but for the SNP as a whole. Policy HOU1 is seeking to address the evidenced need for affordability in the parish, not by aiming to set a standard, but setting out what the community is supportive of, with the acknowledgement that community support will lower the 'planning risk' of a proposal.

3.12 The University states that the housing mix proposed in Policy HOU2 is inconsistent with WBC policy, although the University considers the emerging Local Plan housing mix text is likely to be amended at examination, so it is not yet clear what WBC's position is on this. It is common practice for neighbourhood plans to set their own starting point for affordable housing mix and this has already been done elsewhere in the WBC area (see Twyford Neighbourhood Plan).

3.13 The University disagrees with the inclusion of their land within Policy ENV1 'as it could act to constrain development in sustainable locations adjacent to Sonning and Charvil'. The Local Gap designation is a landscape-led policy requiring the designer and decision-maker of any potential future scheme to consider the visibility and prominence of any proposals in the landscape. The policy is simply intended to ensure that the above is considered and is not intended to limit development of the landowner's land.

3.14 The University references the 2024 HELAA (Ref: 5SO002) in relation to the land east of Garde Road which states: “Whilst relating to the existing settlement, the proposed development would extend the built form into the adjoining open landscape which is highly visible with little visual containment or natural boundary to the east. The proposed development would not lead to the physical coalescence of settlements. It would however extend into the open landscape separating Sonning and Charvil”. The HELAA assessment concluded that ‘the context of the site is considered inappropriate, being inappropriate in terms of established settlement form and pattern, and landscape character’. The HELAA work carried out as part of the WBC Call for Sites was conducted at a much ‘higher level’ than the work of the SNP. Having commissioned a detailed, independent landscape consultant report, the SNP is confident in its assessment that the development would contribute to the physical coalescence of Sonning and Charvil.

#### Pro Vision (on behalf of Holme Park Farm Partnership)

3.15 The landowner is supportive of the SNP choosing to exclude Holme Park Farm from the Local Gaps or being designated as a Local Green Space.

3.16 Holme Park has raised concerns that the housing mix set out in Policy HOU2 is too restrictive and a degree of flexibility should be applied. The policy wording makes it clear that the 50/50 split between affordable rent to ownership is a ‘starting point’ and ‘will be determined on a site-by-site basis’. Clause B of the policy expects development proposals to deliver at least 2/3 of 1-3 bedrooms. The policy responds to local housing requirements and there is an evidenced need for more smaller dwellings in the parish.

3.17 Holme Farm raises concerns around how their land is characterised in the design code and Policy DES1. The SG considers that the distinction between the existing Sonning Meadows development and the surrounding Holme Park Farm is sufficiently clear in the Sonning Design Guidance and Codes document not to cause an inappropriate application of the design codes.

3.18 Holme Farm have queried a proposed footpath extension, shown on Map 8 of the SNP, which runs through Holme Farm. The SG is aware that the route of the proposed footpath was conditional on approval of an as yet unapproved development proposal and is agreeable to the removal of the footpath from the Policies Map.

#### Sport England

3.19 Sport England are supportive of the SNP, including the designation of King George V Field as a Local Green Space. They also note that ‘continuing improvements to the Pavillion’ is listed as an intended use for developer contributions and request that the Parish Council engage with Sport England if and when this takes place.

### **4. Conclusions & Recommendations**

4.1 The representations from WBC, Thames Water, Stantec (on behalf of University of Reading) and Pro Vision (on behalf of Holme Park Farm Partnership) suggest that further clarification and detail is required for policies proposed in SNP. However, it is considered that only minor modifications will be necessary to improve the clarity and application of the policy wording and mapping. In that case, **it is therefore recommended that the SNP can proceed to the Regulation 15 submission stage without further consultations.**