

# WOODCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## SITE EVALUATION CRITERIA

01 March 2018

### Introduction

This document outlines the criteria used to evaluate the suitability of proposed development sites for possible inclusion in an updated Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP2).

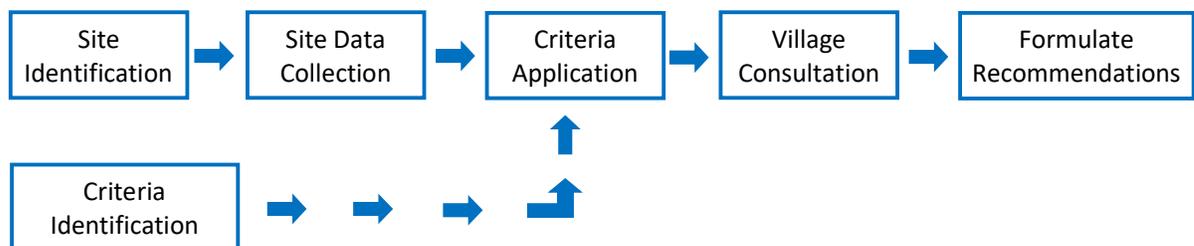
The criteria used are to ensure that WNP2 meets the requirements (the Basic Conditions) specified in the Localism Act. Specifically a Neighbourhood Plan must:

- encourage sustainable development;
- comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- comply with the Local Plan. In this case the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 (SOLP33);
- comply with relevant European legislation, specifically that covering sustainability appraisal and equality rights.

In addition, the Plan, having satisfied the Independent Examiner, must command the support of a majority of those voting in a parish referendum.

The views of the community have been monitored over the last 40 years in 3 Village Appraisals<sup>1</sup>, the Woodcote 2006 Parish Plan<sup>2</sup>, and the survey and consultation work undertaken for the current WNP<sup>3</sup>. These views have been tested again by an all-village survey in 2017 (in which a 70% return was achieved) and two all-village open consultations in March 2017 and February 2018. In this latter case nearly 500 residents attended – some 25% of the adult population.

### Site Evaluation Process



The evaluation of sites follows a six-stage process:

- Criteria Identification;
- Site Identification;
- Site Data Collection;
- Criteria Application;
- Village Consultation; and
- Formulations of Recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> 1984, 1991, 2000

<sup>2</sup> 2008

<sup>3</sup> Made in May 2014

## Criteria Identification

The primary considerations derive from the need to consider the Environmental, Social and Economic impact of developing a site. In turn the:

- Environmental Impact is assessed by considering the impact on the landscape and the local ecology;
- Social impact is assessed by considering the impact on local heritage and culture, on accessibility to services and community facilities, and on pedestrian and road safety; and
- Economic impact is assessed by the increase or loss of economic land and whether the proposed use is the best for that site.

In addition:

1. deliverability is assessed by considering the flood risk, any infrastructure or legal constraints and past planning decisions, appeals and public inquiries covering developments in areas wholly within an AONB.
2. criteria must, to the greatest extent possible, reflect the views of the community.

Criteria within the considerations have been constructed to require, where possible, a binary response: either the site meets a particular criterion, or it doesn't. Thus, for example, a potential housing site may, or may not, have had applications for housing refused in the recent past. This binary approach serves to avoid subjectivity and the possibility of bias, unconscious or otherwise, in the assessments.

## Site Identification

A list of potential sites was constructed from:

- all sites identified by the consultants employed by SODC;
- other sites known to SODC from their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA);
- all sites submitted to the WNP2 Advisory Group in response to an advertisement placed in the Henley Standard.

The resulting list of some 70 entries was reduced to 25 by:

- removing sites that their owners did not want to develop;
- removing duplicates;
- removing sites already allocated for development;
- removing sites already having planning permission; and
- removing sites already developed.

## Site Data Collection

All owners or the agents of landowners/developers were contacted and invited to complete a Site Data Form<sup>4</sup> to provide basic information on the site. All landowners/agents responded except one. The information from the Site Data Form was then supplemented with information from site inspections, desk research and meetings with owners and agents when requested.

## Criteria Evaluation

All site data was held in a computer-based Site Evaluation Model and each site automatically assessed against the criteria to identify those most likely to meet the Basic Conditions and be in general compliance with the requirements of the emerging SOLP33. In so saying it should be noted that the sites that appear most likely at this time will be subject to further scrutiny and may not be included in the final recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup> Attachment A

## Site Evaluation Categories, Criteria and Assessment

| Number    | Consideration              | Criteria  | Assessm't        | Comments/Notes  |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|------------------|---|
|           | <b>IMPACT ON THE AONB</b>  |   |                  | To comply with paragraphs 115 and 116 <sup>5</sup> of the NPPF and Policy ENV1 of the SOLOP33 and SEA requirement and to meet the views of a substantial majority of the residents of Woodcote.                                       |
| <b>1</b>  | ▪ <b>Major Development</b> | Is the site contiguous with the built area of the Village?                            | Yes or No        | To limit the encroachment into the AONB and to avoid creating infill opportunities that would significantly add to the encroachment.  |
| <b>2</b>  |                            | Is the size larger than 1.5HA   | Yes or No        | See WNP Paper 'What constitutes Major Development in an AONB?'  |
| <b>3</b>  | ▪ <b>Landscape</b>         | Is the landscape designated and characteristic of AONB?                               | AONB or not AONB | Landscape is an important consideration in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), the NPPF, and the current and SOLP33.<br><b>The designation of the landscape carries, therefore great weight.</b> |
| <b>4</b>  |                            | Is the site bounded by development or natural boundaries for at least 75%?            | Yes or No        | Impact on the landscape and opportunity for mitigation.   |
| <b>5</b>  |                            | Does the site abut another potential or allocated site?                               | Yes or No        | Composite impact on AONB and other volume related considerations such as traffic movements.   |
| <b>6</b>  |                            | Does the site have features that detract from local character                         | Yes or No        | If the site has such features, then development may be beneficial   |
| <b>7</b>  |                            | Does the site have attractive natural features that would be affected by development? | Yes or No        | In an AONB such features contribute to the quality of the landscape and should be protected if possible.  |
| <b>8</b>  |                            | Is the site visible from nearby public open spaces?                                   | Yes or No        | A hidden site will have a much reduced impact on the AONB and local views and amenity and offer opportunity for effective mitigation.   |
| <b>9</b>  |                            | Would the development impact important views out of the village?                      | Yes or No        | The loss of important views out of the village will reduce local amenity and the value of the location within the AONB.   |
| <b>10</b> |                            | Would the development impact upon an important view into the village?                 | Yes or No        | The loss of an important view into the village, particularly from another designated landscape, will have a negative impact on both the AONB and the other designated landscape   |
| <b>11</b> |                            | Is the site brownfield (i.e. currently developed?)                                    | Yes or No        | Previously developed or brownfield sites will be preferred to reduce the loss of greenfield land in the AONB.   |

<sup>5</sup> Attachment B provides the relevant extracts.

|    |                                  |  |           |  |
|----|----------------------------------|--|-----------|--|
|    | <b>ECONOMY &amp; LAND USE</b>    |  |           | Local employment is an important element in the sustainability and viability of communities and is a consideration in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), NPPF, and SOLP33.<br><b>Protecting current employment sites and providing land for new employment opportunities is, therefore, important</b>  |
| 12 |                                  | Is the site currently a source of employment?  | Yes or No | Sustainability requires the protection of existing employment where possible.  |
| 13 |                                  | Is the site currently allocated for future employment  | Yes or No | Increasing the opportunity for local employment development is an objective of the plan  |
| 14 |                                  | Is the site available for employment?  | Yes or No | Will the landowner make the site available for employment?   |
| 15 |                                  | Is the site available for housing?   | Yes or No | Will the landowner make the site available for housing?  |
|    | <b>HERITAGE</b>                  |  |           |  |
| 16 |                                  | Does the site include any designated heritage assets or is it in a Conservation Area?                          | Yes or No | Heritage and culture are important contributors to the community and must be considered when performing the sustainability appraisal.  |
| 17 |                                  | Is the site immediately adjacent to any designated heritage assets or areas?                                   | Yes or No | Development must be careful not to damage or degrade the setting of significant heritage or cultural assets  |
|    | <b>MOVEMENT</b>                  |  |           |  |
| 18 | ▪ <b>Safe Pedestrian Access.</b> | Continuous footpath to the village amenities (surgery, a shop, Village Hall, Community Centre, bus stops, etc) | Yes or No | Air quality, road safety, public health and other factors all benefit from pedestrian rather than vehicular activity. <b>Walking and accessible public transport are therefore important considerations.</b><br>Safe and easy access for all – especially the elderly, disabled and mothers with young children. <b>Safe pedestrian links to key services are an important consideration and a major concern to residents.</b> |
| 19 |                                  | Pedestrian distance <sup>6</sup> to surgery greater than 400m?   | Yes or No | Distance should not discourage residents, whatever their age or state of health, from walking to the surgery.  |
| 20 |                                  | Pedestrian distance to a bus stop greater than 400m?   | Yes or No | Distance must not be an obstacle to people deciding to use the bus in whatever the weather. Easy access to a bus stop will encourage those travelling to Reading, Wallingford, or Oxford to use public transport.  |
| 21 |                                  | Pedestrian distance to a shop greater than 400m?   | Yes or No | Distance should not discourage residents, whatever their age or state of health, from walking to a shop.   |
| 22 |                                  | Pedestrian distance to the Village Hall or Community Centre greater than 400m?                                 | Yes or No | Distance should not discourage residents, whatever their age or state of health, from walking to local social centres.   |
| 23 |                                  | Pedestrian distance to WPS/Langtree greater than 500m?   | Yes or No | Distance should not discourage children and their parents from walking to the Primary or Secondary school.   |

<sup>6</sup> See Attachment C

|    |                               |   |           |  |
|----|-------------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| 24 |                               | Is the site used informally by local people as a short cut?   | Yes or No | Local short cuts encourage walking and consideration should be given to protecting them.   |
| 25 |                               | Are there any designated pedestrian or cycle routes across the site?  | Yes or No | Walking and cycling must be encouraged and the loss of pedestrian or cycle routes should be avoided.   |
| 26 | ▪ <b>Local Traffic Impact</b> | Distance to nearest traffic hotspot   | Yes or No | There are three dangerous, congested traffic locations in the parish. <b>Development should not, as required by a substantial majority of residents, exacerbate the dangers or congestion at any of these 'hotspots'.</b>  |
| 27 |                               | Is the main route from the site a narrow road – one in which two delivery vans cannot pass each other without mounting the pavement or verge? | Yes or No | Many village roads are narrow or. Development should not be on sites that use such roads for access.   |
| 28 |                               | Is the main route from the site often restricted by on-street parking to a single lane?   | Yes or No | Many village roads are made dangerously or inconveniently narrow by all day parking. Development should neither increase such parking nor rely on such obstructed roads for access.  |
|    | <b>FLOOD RISK</b>             |   |           |  |
| 29 |                               | Is the site vulnerable to flooding?   | Yes or No | A site in an area of high flood risk should, unless reliable preventative measures can be installed, not normally be considered for development.   |
|    | <b>DELIVERABILITY</b>         |   |           |  |
|    |                               |   |           | To be suitable any site must not be constrained by planning conditions or covenants, physically accessible and, because of the referendum, acceptable to the majority of the community.  |
| 30 | ▪ <b>Infrastructure</b>       | Does the site have any infrastructure deficiencies?   | Yes or No | There must be no irredeemable infrastructure obstacles to development of the site.   |
| 31 |                               | Does the landowner own sufficient access to the site?   | Yes or No | Without access a site cannot be developed.   |
| 32 | ▪ <b>Planning History</b>     | Have applications to develop the site been refused by LPA?  | Yes or No | The past refusal of planning applications may indicate reasons why future applications would be refused and thus make the site unlikely to comply with the requirements of the SOLP33.   |
| 33 |                               | Has the community opposed previous applications to develop this site?   | Yes or No | The Localism Act requires that a Neighbourhood Plan receive a majority 'Yes' vote from the community for it to be 'made'. <b>Sites with a long history of strong public opposition are unlikely to receive public approval at referendum</b> and are, therefore, unsuitable for allocation for development in the WNP. |

|    |         |   |           |   |
|----|---------|---|-----------|---|
|    | ECOLOGY | Is the site sensitive environmentally or ecologically?      | Yes or No | The impact on local ecology is required to be considered by the NPPF, the SOLP33 and the SEA regulations. <b>The ecological impact carries, therefore, great weight.</b>  |
| 34 |         | Does the site impact a sensitive site nearby?               | Yes or No | Wildlife corridors, for example, should not be disturbed or compromised.  |
| 35 |         | Is the site a greenfield site                               | Yes or No | Paragraph 111 of the NPPF specifically requires that previously developed land be re-used providing it is not of high environmental value.  |
| 36 |         | Does the site have a hedgerow with mixed flora/fauna >-25m? | Yes or No | Hedgerows are important wildlife habitats, feeding areas and corridors. Significant weight should be given to their preservation and improvement.<br>Hedges are also significant contributors to local character. |
| 37 |         | Does the site have a hedgerow with mixed flora/fauna <25m?  | Yes or No |   |
| 38 |         | Does the site have a short monoculture hedge or no hedge?   | Yes or No |   |
| 39 |         | Are there more than 6 TPO'd trees?                          | Yes or No | Tree Protection Orders protect valuable trees. Sites with trees subject to TPO's are less likely to be deliverable..  |
| 40 |         |   |           |   |

# ATTACHMENT A

# Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan

## Site Data Form

Many sites have been offered for development in Woodcote. All are in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty and all, therefore, have to be weighed carefully to minimise the impact on, and erosion of, the AONB. The information on this form is required to help assess that impact and to rank sites on their contribution to the development needs of Woodcote as seen by the community.

In the absence of the information on this form the qualities of the site cannot be assessed. Providing the information means that the site can be objectively and properly assessed but does not mean that the site will be allocated for development.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>1 Site Address</b> |  |
|                       |  |
|                       |  |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>2 Owner(s)</b> |  |
| <b>Address</b>    |  |
|                   |  |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>3 Agent</b> |  |
| <b>Address</b> |  |
|                |  |

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>4 Have you attached a map of the site?</b> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
|---|----------|----------|

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| <b>5 How big is the site?</b> | Hectares |
|-------------------------------|----------|

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>6 Would the owner allow the site be developed for:</b> |          |          |
| • Housing?  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Education?  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Health Services?  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Employment?   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Recreation?   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>7 Are there any constraints or covenants that contain development on the site?</b> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
|---|----------|----------|

|  |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|
| <b>8 Is any of the land currently developed?</b> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>If so then please provide details</b>         |          |          |

|   |
|---|
| <b>9 Where will traffic enter and leave the site?</b> |
|---|

|  |  |        |
|--|--|--------|
| <b>10 How far is that access point from:</b>                                 |  |        |
| • The junction of Bridle Path, Beech Lane and the Goring Road?               |  | metres |
| • The junction of the South Stoke Road, the Reading Road and the Goring Road |  | metres |
| • The nearest entrance/exit to Langtree School?                              |  | metres |

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>11 Will you provide traffic calming at, or near, the access to the site if required by the Parish Council?</b> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
|---|----------|----------|

|  |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|
| <b>12 Does the site connect to the existing paved footpath in the village?</b> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
|--|----------|----------|

|  |  |        |
|--|--|--------|
| <b>13 How far, by public paved footpath, is the site from:</b> |  |        |
| • The Village Hall?  |  | metres |
| • The Primary School?  |  | metres |
| • The Secondary School?  |  | metres |
| • The Post Office?   |  | metres |
| • The Co-operative store?                                      |  | metres |
| • A bus stop?  |  | metres |

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>14 Would development of the site:</b>                      |          |          |
| • Require the loss of any trees?                              | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Require the loss of significant wildlife habitat?           | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Result in the loss of agricultural land graded 3a or above? | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Require the loss of any archaeological sites?               | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Have an impact on any heritage assets?                      | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>15 Housing. Will you:</b>  |          |          |
| • provide 40% of new homes on the site as affordable?                   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • give preference to new open market homes on the site to local buyers? | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • provide 1 parking space per bedroom for all new homes on the site?    | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |

|  |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|
| <b>16 Carbon Footprint. Will you commit to any development on the site having:</b> |          |          |
| • Solar photo-voltaic panels?  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Solar water heating panels?  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| • Grey water management systems?   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |

**17 Other Information**

Please add any other information that you think relevant to this land. This should include:

- The style and type of housing, if known; and
- A likely timescale for the development.

Signed by

Date

Print name

Position

On behalf of

## ATTACHMENT B      NPPF Designated Landscape Requirements

The following extracts from NPPF paragraphs 115 and 116.

**115. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty** in National Parks, the Broads and **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads<sup>2</sup>.

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

- the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy
- **the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area**, or meeting the need for it in some other way
- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated

other paragraphs are material, for example:

**110. In preparing plans** to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework.

**111. Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land** by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.

## ATTACHMENT C. Pedestrian Distance

Acceptable walking distances are hard to define but the **The Institution of Highways & Transportation Guidelines for Journeys on Foot (2000)** offer some guidance. They note that 'acceptable walking distances are a function of:

- An individual's fitness and physical ability;
- Encumbrances, eg shopping, pushchair;
- Time savings;
- Journey purpose;
- Personal motivation;
- General deterrents to walking; and
- mobility impairment.

The WNP wishes, in line with the NPPF and SOLP, to encourage walking and thus has adopted the guidelines below (from the Institution of Highway Guidelines) when assessing walking distances.

These suggest desirable, acceptable and preferred maximum distances to the town centre of 200, 400 and 800 m respectively. In Woodcote the town centre is interpreted as essential health, educational and social services and, given the ageing demographic of the village, acceptable walking distances defined as:

- 400 m to the Surgery
- 400m to the Village Hall or Community Centre
- 400m to the nearest shop
- 500 m to the Primary School; and
- 400 m to the nearest bus stop providing access to services in Wallingford, Reading or Oxford.

The ideal site would be within all these distances not least because the distances refer to level ground. Where the route contains upward sloping paths then these acceptable distances should be reduced..