This note has been prepared by the Save Winterbrook Group in response to the Inspector’s request for comments on the NPPF as they relate to the soundness of the Core Strategy. There are a number of statements in the NPPF and local circumstances that have changed the context within which the decisions on whether site B or E should be allocated for developed. We consider that the NPPF places a new emphasis on certain key factors and the schedule below identifies relevant extracts from the NPPF against which comments are made regarding the choice of site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract from NPPF</th>
<th>Relevance to site selection</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heritage/townscape/ environment</strong></td>
<td>The development of site E and in particular its eastern element and access via 2 Winterbrook will harm the special character of Winterbrook, a significant part of which is now proposed as a Conservation Area. The character assessment which has been prepared by SODC sets out the reasons why Winterbrook is considered to be an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.</td>
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<td>Para.7 outlines three dimensions to sustainable development. The third environmental role states “planning should contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.”</td>
<td>The Inspector in the Wates June 2011 appeal decision at para. 33 also recognised the importance of the linear nature and sense of enclosure of Winterbrook and that (at that time) it represented a non-designated asset. To build 555 homes on site E with a new vehicular access at 2 Winterbrook will not protect or enhance the built and historic environment of Winterbrook with its linear form, special semi-rural character and many designated and undesignated assets. The pattern of fields within Site E offers a distinct countryside setting which forms an integral part of the Winterbrook’s special character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This policy constraint does not apply to site B as it is surrounded by modern development with no identified historic or</td>
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Para.9 states “pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment.”

Para 17, Core planning principles; bullet point 7 states “contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;”

Core planning principles; bullet point 10 states “Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of future generations”

Para.47 bullet point 5 allows LPA to: “set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>landscape value.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The development of site E will harm rather than positively improve the special historic and environmental character of Winterbrook. There is insufficient evidence regarding the impact on ecology associated with the crossings over the Brook to give the confidence required for site allocation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This policy constraint does not apply to site B as its development would not have any impact on the historic environment. Site B also does not have the same ecological sensitivity.</td>
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Conserving the special architectural and historic interest of Winterbrook and its setting provides an attractive semi-rural approach into Wallingford which is enjoyed by many people every day.

As the development of site B will have no impact on the historic heritage, its development will not contribute to the quality of life of future generations.

This is a new provision which enables LPAs to set their own housing densities by taking local circumstances into account. The average density of development in Winterbrook is 10 dwellings per ha. If development was ever to take place on site E, the density should more closely reflect the density of the surrounding area. 555 dwellings would result in an inappropriate density on the site as the developable area is significantly reduced once you have allowed for the environmental corridor along the brook, the important archaeology south of Winterbrook Lane, retention of the paddock fronting Winterbrook Lane and the noise/landscape buffers required along the bypass, railway and where the development comes close to the proposed Conservation Area.
Para.60 last sentence states “It is however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness”

Para.65 states; “LPA’s should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design (unless the concern relates to a designated heritage asset and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting which is not outweighed by the proposal’s economic social and environmental benefits).”

Para 109 states (inter alia): “The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability;”

The development of 555 homes right on the edge of Winterbrook, a small semi-rural hamlet will overwhelm it and harm rather than reinforce its local distinctiveness.

**A development of 555 homes on site B would be more in keeping with the character of the surrounding development than on site E**

The development of site E for 555 homes would harm to a significant degree the character and appearance and setting of the proposed Winterbrook conservation area as well as the existing designated heritage assets. If some other social, economic and environmental benefits of developing sites E and B are equal, the heritage impacts are not. To meet the requirements of this policy site B should be chosen for development ahead of site E.

Site E includes a landscape which has been identified by the local Council and community as a ‘valued’ one. It should therefore be protected. The same value cannot reasonably be attributed to Site B.

Similar considerations apply in relation to biodiversity. The characteristics of Site E including the Bradford’s Brook ecological network and old orchard are not matched at Site B. It is considered that selecting Site B, incorporating biodiversity into its design and protecting Site E from development will minimise the impact on biodiversity.

With the prospect of an allocated Minerals extraction site to the south of Site E there is the possibility of risk from air pollution or an added constraint on one or other development.
Para.110 clearly states “Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.”

Para.126 bullet point three, states that in developing strategies for conservation LPA should take account of; “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

Para 130. States “Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.”

This is new guidance which clearly favours the selection of site B for development as it has less environmental value. Site B does not have:

- nationally important archaeology
- a sensitive environmental corridor along a brook

nor is it:

- partly within and adjacent to a proposed conservation area
- adjacent to designated and undesignated heritage assets

and it will be likely to

- have less impact on the Air Quality Management area in Wallingford

Development at Winterbrook, including a major access at 2 Winterbrook will not preserve or enhance the special distinctive character of Winterbrook as set out in the Winterbrook Character Assessment and supported by many Inspectors in planning appeals.

The deliberate attempt by Wates to destroying the character of Winterbrook by boarding up a house and removing the trees and hedges along the frontage of the site and replacing it with an unsightly fence should not be taken into account in any decisions. This was the view reached by Planning Inspector Phillimore at paragraph 35 of his 2011 decision on Wates’ appeal: “The Council reasonably argues that, were the redevelopment scheme not to proceed, re-use of no. 2 as a house could be expected to lead to the restoration of frontage features. The current appearance therefore does not form a long-term baseline for consideration of the proposal.”
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<tr>
<th>Well-being and healthy communities</th>
<th>Sustainable travel</th>
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<td>Para 17, Core planning principles; Bullet point 12 states: “take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.”</td>
<td>Selection of Site B would better implement the Council’s Leisure Facilities Strategy which identifies Wallingford Sports Park as a ‘Tier 1’ Hub site for improvement. The strategy states that such sites “are key to the delivery of sport and physical activity in the district” and an integrated development at Site B with the Sports Park and its social facilities will best meet local needs.</td>
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<td>Para 70 states (inter alia): To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:</td>
<td>The opportunity presented by Site B, relative to the Sports Park, is unique and would ensure the sort of integrated approach and enhanced community and residential environment envisaged by the NPPF. The Sports Park offers a sports venue and a meeting place (licenced premises and meeting/ function rooms for hire) all on the doorstep. This could not be matched by development at Site E.</td>
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<td>- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;</td>
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<td>- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.</td>
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<td>Para 73 states (inter alia): Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable travel</td>
<td>In the context of Wallingford, its distribution of facilities, patterns of movement and ‘modal split’ what best promotes sustainable modes of transport is complex and involves a balance of issues.</td>
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<td>Para 30 states: “In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport.</td>
<td>There are a number of factors which favour the choice of B over E which include:</td>
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<td>Para 34 states: “Plans and decisions should ensure developments that</td>
<td>- There is a weighting of facilities towards the northern side of Wallingford and it is</td>
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generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in this Framework, particularly in rural areas.

Para 35 states (inter alia): “Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to

- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;”

Similar guidance is included in Para 17, Core planning principles; Bullet point 11

Para 37 states: “Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.”

### Flooding

Para 101 states: “The aim of the Sequential Test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will provide the basis for applying this test. A sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk from any form of flooding.”

It is acknowledged that to date development at Site E has not been ruled out through the SFRA. However it remains that until only a few years ago the area liable to flood extended into Site E. The area was redefined by the Environment Agency following submissions by the developers. The basis for this has been questioned and investigations continue.

Choosing Site B would be safer from a flooding point of view as the site has no such issues to consider.

### Localism & local planning

Para 1 states: “The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the

The recurring theme is to empower the local community through their accountable Councils to produce their own plans and
**Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.** It sets out the Government’s requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.”

Para 17, the first bullet point under ‘Core planning principles’ states that both plan-making and decision making should: “be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.”

Para 150 states (inter alia): “Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities.”

Para 183 states: “Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need.”

Interference in this process should be based on weighty and overriding evidence which it is considered does not apply in this instance.

The District Council, in arriving at (and subsequently adhering to) its allocation of Wallingford Site B has discharged its local community leadership role after extensive community engagement and working with the Parish and Town Councils. It has identified loss to the local environment (natural and historic) if Site E were to be developed and has cogently argued that Site B would lead to a more sustainable development.

The Save Winterbrook group supports the local Council’s analysis and it is considered that the NPPF reinforces the need for the Inspector to similarly support the local vision and choice of Site B. With the emphasis on Localism the Inspector would need to identify persuasive and ‘solid’ reasons for preferring Site E. This is simply not the current situation.

This approach is reinforced by a recent statement by Greg Clark (Minister of State) in Parliament on 24 April 2012 when he was speaking about the NPPF:

> “Our reforms have three objectives—first, to transfer power to communities, to give them more power and authority in the planning system than they have been used to having for many years; secondly, to ensure that we support the building of the homes that the next generation will need and the jobs that all our constituents need now and in the future; and thirdly to ensure that the next generation inherits an environment, natural and historic, that is at least the equal of the environment that we inherited. In my view, it should be better than the environment that we inherited. I believe in progress.”

> “I met the Planning Inspectorate and almost all the planning inspectors who were in conference in Bristol the day after the NPPF
was launched. I made it crystal clear that it provided for a localist approach and provided a framework for local decisions, and that I expected decisions to be taken in that vein. I will also expect to see a sample of the decisions that are being taken, including after the examination of plans, to ensure that that is happening. On the basis of my direct discussions with the Planning Inspectorate, I am very confident that that is understood.”