

# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Revised Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan (RLWNP)

Environmental Report: Further Update

March 2019

## Quality information

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## Revision History

<u>Revision date</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Authorised</u>	<u>Position</u>
23/10/18	Final report for submission	Mark Fessey	Associate Director
12/03/18	Final report for further consultation and submission	Mark Fessey	Associate Director

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Revised Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan (RLWNP).
- 1.2 The RLWNP is being prepared by Long Wittenham Parish Council in the context of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and the new emerging Local Plan.<sup>1</sup> Once the RLWNP has been 'made' it will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the latest adopted South Oxfordshire Plan.
- 1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising the positives. SEA of the RLWNP is a legal requirement.<sup>2</sup>

## SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.5 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the **Environmental Report**) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan, and reasonable alternatives'.<sup>3</sup> The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
  - 1) What has plan-making / SEA involved **up to this point**?
    - Including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
  - 2) What are the SEA findings **at this stage**?
    - i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
  - 3) What happens **next**?

## This Environmental Report Further Update

- 1.7 The Environmental Report was published alongside the draft – 'pre-submission' – version of the plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended), in 2018. An 'Environmental Report Update' was then submitted alongside the plan, under Regulation 15. The decision was then taken to undertake further consultation on the Environmental Report with a view to exploring further issues raised with regards to mineral resources. This 'Environmental Report Further Update' is published alongside the 'Submission' version of the Plan with a view to facilitating this consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> The existing Local Plan comprises the Saved Policies of the Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2006) and the Core Strategy (adopted 2012) - see [southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-development-plan](http://southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-development-plan)

<sup>2</sup> Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The WNP was subject to screening in 2017, including through consultation, at which time it was determined that SEA is required.

<sup>3</sup> Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

- 1.8 This report essentially **answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn**, in order to provide the required information.<sup>4</sup> Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report. Before answering Q1, two initial questions are answered in order to further set the scene.
- 1.9 This 'Further Update' includes extra consideration of mineral resource issues, which has resulted in minor changes to:
- The baseline review and SEA objectives for the SEA topic of 'land, soil and water resources'
  - The appraisal of site options and reasonable alternatives
  - The appraisal of the Plan as a whole

## 2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

### Overview

- 2.1 As discussed above, once the RLWNP has been 'made' (following a successful referendum) it will form part of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, at which time it will have material weight in the determination of planning applications, i.e. applications relating to changes in land use.
- 2.2 There is already an adopted Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan, which will be superseded by the RLWNP. The original Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan (LWNP) was adopted on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
- 2.3 The area covered by RLWNP is Long Whittenham Parish - see **Figure 2.1**.

### The South Oxfordshire Local Plan

- 2.4 As discussed above, the RLWNP is being prepared in the context of the adopted and emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The RLWNP must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, supplementing these with locally specific policies as appropriate.
- 2.5 The emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation, with the Proposed Submission version of the plan having been published, under Regulation 19 of the Local Planning Regulations, in autumn 2017.
- 2.6 A decision was subsequently made (Full Council; May 2018) to delay submission pending further work to assess site/strategy options; however, it is expected that the great majority of the plan, as previously published, will be progressed to submission / examination and ultimately adoption. A further update on the situation is anticipated in August 2018.
- 2.7 The emerging Local Plan provides strong support for neighbourhood planning and seeks to empower local communities to direct development in their areas by supporting the "way of life" of rural communities. The objectives of the emerging Local Plan seek to deliver high quality development, respecting the scale and character of villages such as Long Whittenham.
- 2.8 The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) identifies Long Wittenham as one of 48 settlements classed as 'smaller village' within the District. This remains the case within the publication version of the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.9 The emerging strategy for housing distribution in the smaller villages is for each settlement to grow by between 5 and 10%, in terms of housing stock, between 2011 and 2033. In the case of Long Wittenham, this equates to around 15 new homes.

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<sup>4</sup> See **Appendix I** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

- 2.10 However, this does not mean that there is a requirement for the RLWNP to provide for this number of homes. This is because, since 2011, 40 new homes have already been completed (known as 'completions') or received planning permission (known as 'commitments').
- 2.11 The key point to note is that, having taken account of completions and commitments, there is no requirement for the RLWNP to allocate land for new homes.

## Aims and objectives of the RLWNP

- 2.12 As discussed above, there is no requirement for the RLWNP to allocate land for new homes. However, there is a need to consider taking a positive approach to the allocation of land for development nonetheless, recognising the potential benefits that might be realised.
- 2.13 In particular, there is a desire to deliver a new '**community hub**', to include a new primary school (and other community facilities), which necessitates delivery of some 'enabling housing' alongside. Without delivery of enabling housing, delivery of a new community hub would not be financially viable.
- 2.14 Policy LW1 of the made Neighbourhood Plan (2017) supports a new community hub, and recognises that an element of market housing should be provided alongside, in order to enable the scheme in financial terms; however, no specific site for the scheme was allocated.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.15 The situation has now changed, such that it is now deemed necessary to allocate a site. In particular, the situation changed following granting of planning permission (at appeal) for 36 homes, adjacent to the village centre, in late 2017.<sup>6</sup> The implication is that options for delivering a new hub have narrowed, and there is a concern that delivery of the hub could be jeopardised by any further permissions.<sup>7</sup>

N.B. there are other reasons beside for taking a proactive approach to housing delivery, i.e. an approach that involves going beyond the requirement for small villages established by the emerging Local Plan,<sup>8</sup> however, the primary reason relates to delivery of a community hub.

- 2.16 In short, the key aim of the RLWNP is to allocate a site for a new community hub and enabling housing. Beyond this, the aim is to deliver the following vision for the village -

*"In the year 2033, Long Wittenham will be a place where:*

- *A new community hub will be conveniently located. This will provide a modern and well-equipped village hall that can accommodate a range of clubs and activities, perhaps contain a shop or café, host pop-up craft and food markets, and be the stage for public life in the village.*
- *The modern primary school/pre-school will have good outdoor facilities and capacity to accommodate all children's needs.*
- *Playing fields for the school and the community will be available with modern facilities to encourage healthy life styles throughout the year.*
- *There will be good provision for sustainable transport routes in the village to encourage more people to walk and cycle for commuting and recreational purposes.*

<sup>5</sup> The intention, at the time, was to follow the Neighbourhood Plan with preparation of a Community Right to Build Order, which would identify a location for the community hub, and take the scheme forward (bypassing the need for a planning application).

<sup>6</sup> APP/Q3115/W/17/3169755

<sup>7</sup> Latest understanding, as of July 2018, is that South Oxfordshire has a five year housing land supply, such that there is a greatly decreased risk of speculative planning applications being granted planning permission. However, the situation could change, i.e. there is always a risk of South Oxfordshire losing its five year housing land supply.

<sup>8</sup> In particular, allocation of land for housing will mean that Long Wittenham will benefit from a degree of protection against further speculative applications. This is on the basis of the Ministerial Letter of 12 December 2016, which provides for protection against speculative applications where: A) there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place that allocates land for housing; and B) the District is able to demonstrate a *three year housing land supply* (as opposed to a five year housing land supply).

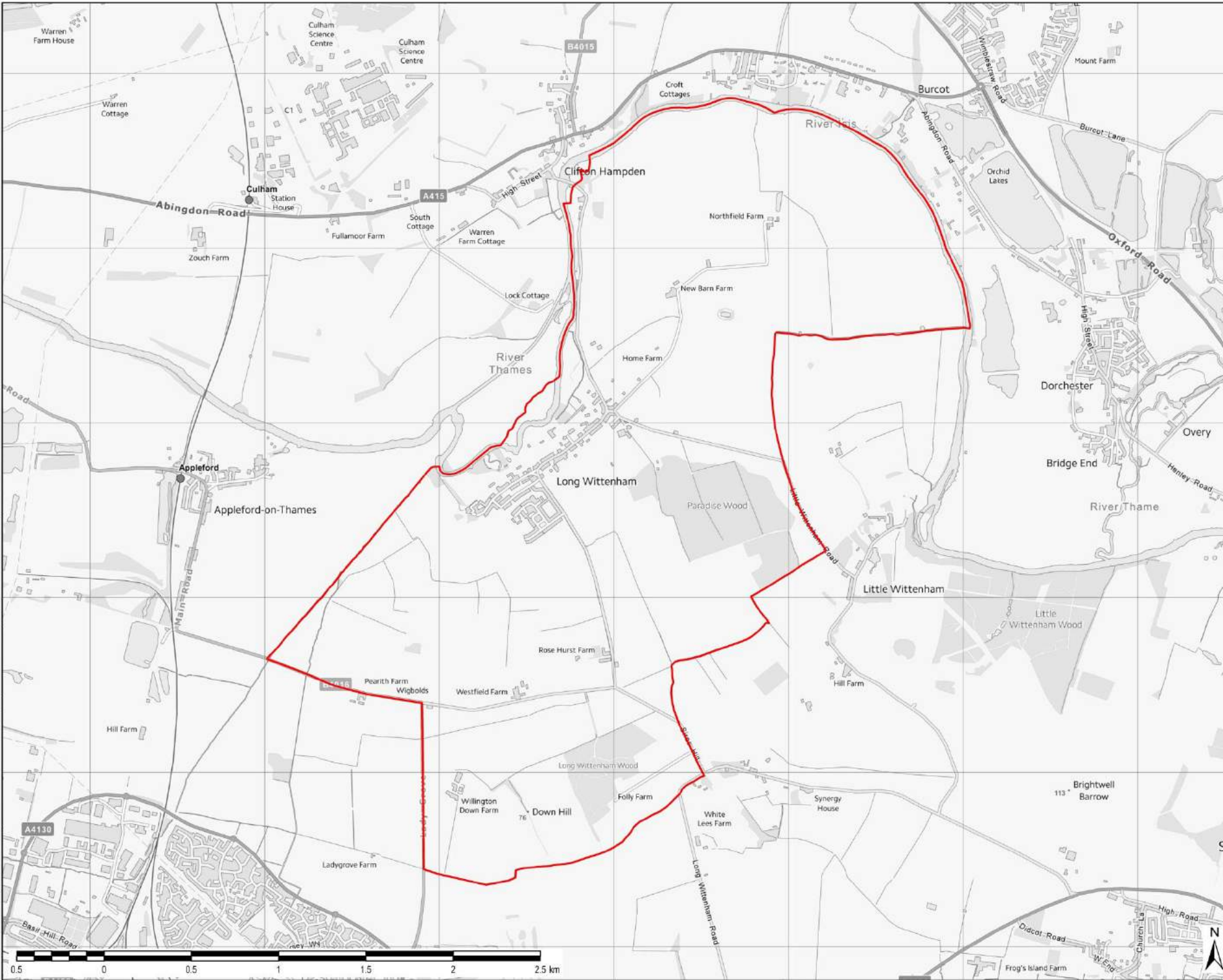
- *On-street parking will be reduced, and road users will have unimpeded access through the village.*
- *The high-quality character of the village, including its physical and visual links to the surrounding countryside and the River Thames, will be as good or better than in 2018.*
- *There is a pleasant and green environment that respects biodiversity, local views and the intrinsic value of the countryside.*
- *Sufficient new housing of the right type will be available to meet the changing needs of the villagers as they start new families or down-size for retirement.”*

### **What is the RLWNP not seeking to achieve?**

- 2.17 It is important to emphasise that neighbourhood plan-making is a relatively strategic undertaking, in that consideration of some detailed issues naturally falls outside its scope, in the knowledge that such issues can be sufficiently addressed through subsequent planning applications (for example site specific issues such as detailed design, layout and access arrangements). The strategic nature of the plan is reflected in the scope of the SEA.

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 Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan Area



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 Client: **LONG WITTENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Project Title: **SEA FOR THE LONG WITTENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Drawing Title: **LONG WITTENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA**

Drawn CN	Checked JW	Approved RC	Date 14/06/2018
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File Name: I:\004 - Information Systems\0571087 - Neighbourhood Plan\_CFD\_2018\_202203\_Maps\Long Wittenham NP Steering Group\Figure 1-1 - Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan Area.mxd



## 3. What is the scope of the SEA?

### Introduction

3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e. the sustainability issues/objectives that should be a focus of (and provide a methodological framework for) SEA. Further information on the scope of the SEA is presented in **Appendix II**.

### Consultation

3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England.<sup>9</sup> As such, these authorities were consulted in 2018.<sup>10</sup>

### The SEA framework

3.3 Table 3.1 presents the list of topics and objectives that form the core of the SEA framework.

**Table 3.1: The SEA framework**

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.
Climate change	Reduce contribution to climate change
	Support resilience to the effects of climate change, including flooding
Landscape and historic environment	Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource, including the historic environment and archaeological assets.
	Protect and enhance character and quality of land and townscapes, in particular the setting of the AONB
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.
	Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.
	Use and manage water and land resources in a sustainable manner.
Population / community	Cater for existing and future residents’ needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.
	Reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.
	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types, tenures.
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents.
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

<sup>9</sup> In line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes’.

<sup>10</sup> The SEA Scoping Report is available on the Neighbourhood Plan website

Part 1:  
What has  
plan-making / SEA  
involved up to this point?

## 4. Introduction (to Part 1)

- 4.1 The aim here is to explain how work was undertaken to develop and assess **reasonable alternatives** in spring/summer 2018, ahead of finalising the Pre-submission Plan.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration that has been given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the plan (see Chapter 3), namely the allocation of land for a community hub and enabling housing.

N.B. henceforth, alternative approaches to the allocation of land, for a community hub and enabling housing, are referred to simply as '**growth scenarios**'.

### Structure of this part of the report

- 4.3 This part of the report is structured as follows -
- Chapter 6** - explains the process of **establishing** growth scenarios;
  - Chapter 7** - presents the outcomes of **assessing** growth scenarios;
  - Chapter 8** - explains reasons for **establishing** the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

### Who's responsibility?

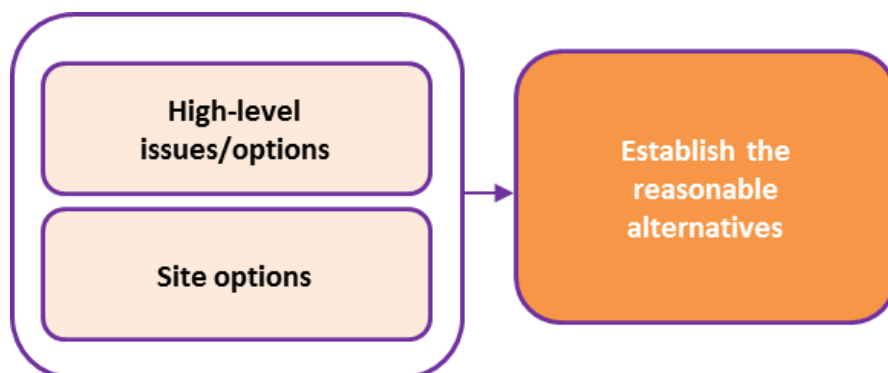
- 4.4 It is important to be clear that -
- **Establishing reasonable alternatives** - is ultimately the responsibility of the plan-maker, however it is naturally the case that AECOM is well placed to advise.
  - **Assessing the reasonable alternatives** - is the responsibility of the SEA consultant, namely AECOM.
  - **Establishing the preferred option** - is the responsibility of the plan-maker.

## 5. Establishing the reasonable alternatives

### Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to discuss the key steps taken to inform the establishment of growth scenarios. The aim is to present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.<sup>11</sup>
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to: **1)** explain strategic issues/objectives with a bearing on the establishment of growth scenarios; **2)** discuss work completed to examine site options (i.e. sites potentially in contention for allocation); and then **3)** explain how the ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ understanding generated was married together in order to arrive at growth scenarios.
- 5.3 Figure 5.1 explains this stepwise process.

**Figure 5.1: Establishing the reasonable alternatives**



### Strategic issues / objectives

- 5.4 As discussed, the first step involved giving consideration to strategic issues / objectives with a bearing on the establishment of growth scenarios.
- 5.5 Firstly, there is a need to reiterate the context provided by the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, as already discussed above (Section 2.2), and expand somewhat. The key messages are that:
- There is no requirement to allocate land for housing through the RLWNP (given completions and commitments since the start of the plan period meet the target figure proposed through the Local Plan).
  - The emerging Local Plan is supportive of Neighbourhood Plans taking a proactive approach, i.e. delivering housing over-and-above the target figure, in order to achieve specific aims.
  - The emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation, and so can be considered to have considerable weight; however, it is yet to be subject to an examination in public, and so is potentially subject to change.
- 5.6 Secondly, there is a need to discuss further the established vision for creation of a new community hub for Long Wittenham. As already discussed above, Policy LW1 of the current LWNP (2017) supports a new community hub comprising a new location for the **primary school**, a **pre-school**, **village hall** and other **community facilities** including a shop, parking and sports facilities. The proposal reflects the ageing nature of the existing community and educational facilities in the

<sup>11</sup> Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations.

village, the lack of a shop (the village shop and post office closed in 2006) and a desire for a new hub to be a focal point of village life.

- 5.7 The location of the current school and village hall can be seen in **Figure 5.2**. It is also the case that relocation of these facilities to a new site would free-up the existing sites for a change of use, potentially including development of a small number of well-designed homes in central locations and a village green that would enhance the setting of the War Memorial, and provide a centrally located outdoor space for community events.

**Figure 5.2: Current location of the school and village hall**



## Site options

- 5.8 The second step involved identifying and assessing the site options that are potentially in contention for allocation through the RLWNP. Site options can be thought of as the 'building blocks' for establishing growth scenarios.

N.B. it is important to emphasise that this process was led by the Parish Council, with support from their planning consultant.

- 5.9 There is a clear preference for a single site to deliver both the new community hub and sufficient enabling housing. This is because there is no clear mechanism to collect sufficient funds from a package of sites; however, for completeness all available site options are examined here.
- 5.10 The long-list of potential site options is presented in **Table 5.1**. More information on the establishment of this list is available within the Parish Council's "Site Allocations" evidence paper (2018).

**Table 5.1: Site options**

Reference (2018)	Comments	Need for further examination?
1: Fieldside	Gained permission (at appeal) for 36 dwellings	No
2: Didcot Road	The landowner has agreed to make site available at a discounted rate.	Yes
3: Land off unmade road to east of village		Yes
4: West Field / Saxons Heath	Component part of larger SHELAA site 1052	Yes
5: West Field / Thames Path	Component part of larger SHELAA site 1052	Yes
6: Bodkins playing field		Yes
7: Primary School	Redevelopment at both sites would be supported following a new community hub.	No
8: Village Hall		
9: Land off High Street / east of village		Yes
SHELAA Site 925: East of Didcot Road	Comprises sites 1 and 2.	No
SHELAA Site 1014: Willington Down Farm	SHELAA identifies this site as <i>not</i> suitable, available or achievable.	No
SHELAA Site 1052: North of Pearith Farm	SHELAA concludes <i>not</i> suitable or achievable for housing, but employment is an option	Yes

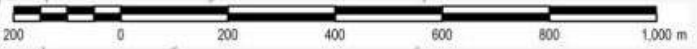
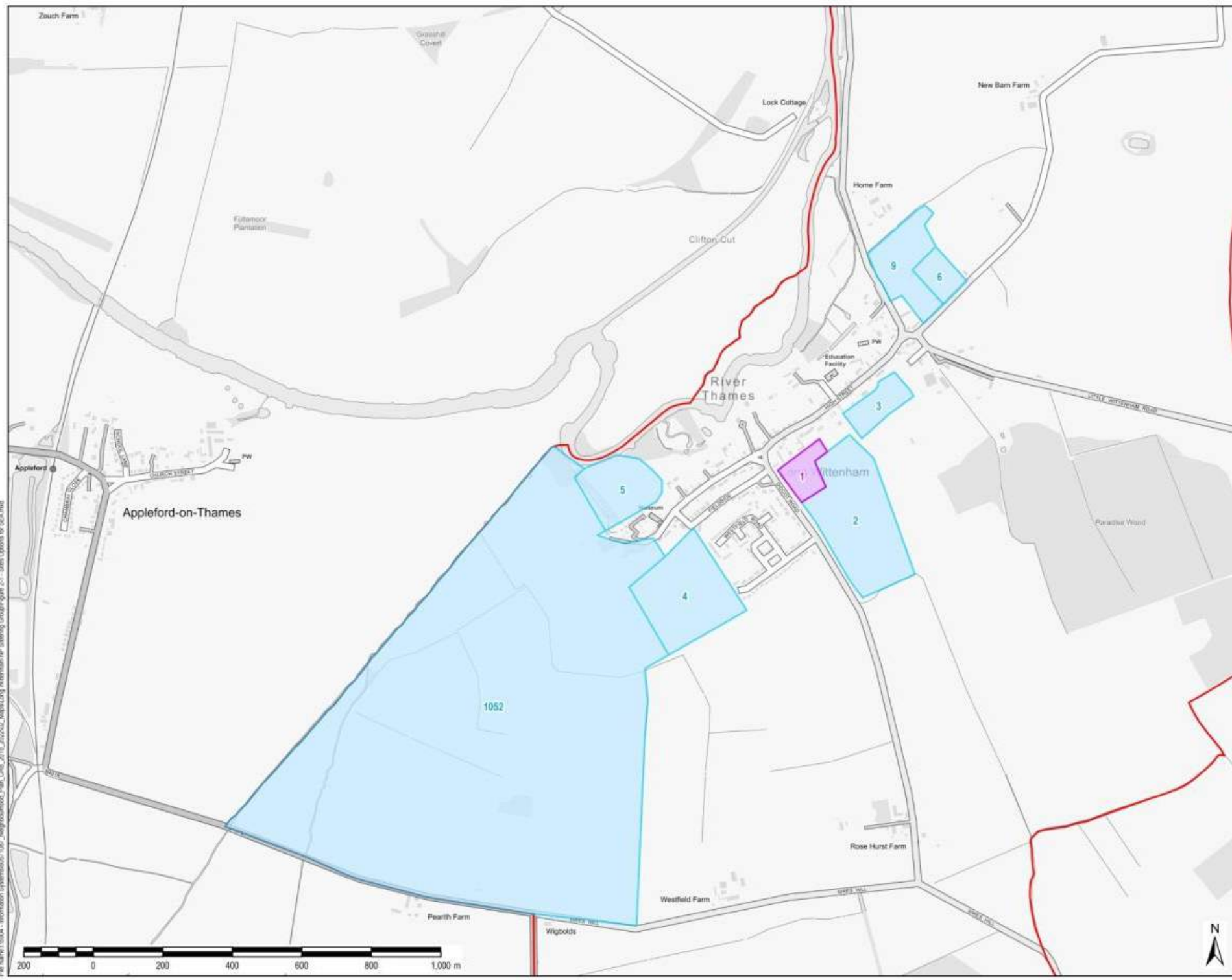
5.11 In light of the above discussion, there is a need to examine the following sites in greater detail -

- 2: Didcot Road
- 3: Land off unmade road to east of village
- 4: West Field / Saxons Heath
- 5: West Field / Thames Path
- 6: Bodkins playing field
- 9: Land off High Street / east of village
- SHELAA Site 1052: Land north of Pearith Farm

5.12 The sites in question are shown on **Figure 5.3**, and a detailed examination of these sites is presented in **Appendix III**. In summary, the following conclusions are reached -

- **Sites 3 and 5** would likely require mitigation to avoid negative effects on the Ecologically Sensitive Zone south of Fieldside and Hayward's Eyot Local Wildlife Site, whilst
- **Sites 5 and 1052** contain or are adjacent to BAP Priority Habitats (Deciduous Woodland).
- **Sites 5, 9 and 1052** contain significant areas of flood risk.
- **Sites 2 and 3** are located in an area that could potentially affect locally valued views into and out of the AONB.
- **Sites 2, 4, 5 and 1052** may require archaeological investigation prior to development.
- **Site 6** would result in the loss of existing playing fields.
- **Sites 2 and 3** are located centrally in the village, whilst other sites are more peripheral.

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Drawing Title **SITE OPTIONS PROGRESSED FOR SEA**

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**FIGURE 5.3** No. **01**

## Growth scenarios

- 5.13 In light of the above discussion (i.e. discussion of high-level issues/options and site option), it is possible to establish growth scenarios.
- 5.14 The first point to note is that **Site 2** is a clear 'stand-out' site on the basis that the landowner has agreed to make the site available at a discounted price, as discussed in Table 5.1. The implication is that only c.40 enabling homes would be necessitated. It is also the case that the site is subject to fairly limited constraints, as discussed at para 5.10. A scenario involving delivery of a new community hub, alongside enabling housing, is discussed below as **Option 1**.
- 5.15 The only other site that could feasibly deliver a new community hub, alongside sufficient enabling housing, is SHELAA site 1052 (incorporating sites 4 and 5). The site is available at the market rate, which means that a *large number* of enabling homes would be necessary (likely several hundred), in order to fund delivery of the hub. There are a number of constraints associated with this site; however, it could feasibly deliver a new community hub alongside sufficient enabling housing, and hence this scenario is examined further below, as **Option 2**.
- 5.16 It is difficult to envisage any other realistic scenario. Though other sites discussed above could feasibly deliver housing, all are smaller and would be available at market rates, such that it would not be possible to deliver a new community hub and sufficient enabling housing on a single site. A package of sites would be necessitated, with funds for a new community hub 'pooled'; however, as discussed above, there would be no clear mechanism for achieving this.
- 5.17 In summary, there are two 'reasonable alternative' growth scenarios, as follows -
- **Option 1** -Delivering the hub at the Didcot Road site (40 dwellings)
  - **Option 2** - Delivering the hub at SHELAA site 1052 (several hundred dwellings)

## 6. Appraising reasonable alternatives

### Introduction

- 6.1 The aim of this chapter is to present assessment findings in relation to the growth scenarios introduced above.

### Alternatives assessment findings

- 6.2 **Table 6.1** presents summary assessment findings in relation to the two growth scenarios, with more detailed assessment findings presented within **Appendix IV**. With regards to methodology -

Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand side seek to both categorise the performance of each option in terms of 'significant effects' (using red / amber / green) and also rank the alternatives in order of performance. Also, ' = ' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them).



**Table 6.1: Summary alternative assessment findings**

Objectives	Option 1: Didcot Road	Option 2: SHELAA site 1052
Biodiversity	★ 1	2
Climate change	★ 1	2
Landscape and historic environment	=	=
Land, soil and water resources	★ 1	2
Population and community	★ 1	2
Health and wellbeing	=	=
Transportation	★ 1	2

**Assessment conclusion**

The assessment finds Option 1 to perform notably best, in that no major draw-backs, relative to Option 2, are identified. Whilst it is not the role of alternatives assessment to directly lead to the selection of a preferred option (rather, it is the role of the plan-maker, after having balanced the pros and cons identified through the assessment), in this instance a preferred option is clearly indicated.

However, Option 1 is not without its issues/impacts. Notably, a scheme to the south of the village could impinge on views to/from Wittenham Clumps, which are two adjacent hills that are popular viewpoints within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

It is also the case that part of the Clumps is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and the southern hill is a Scheduled Monument (Sinodun Hill camp). However, there is little reason to suggest the potential for impacts, with minimal increases in recreational pressure likely from residents of the c.40 additional homes. The Clumps are well managed as a nature reserve, by the Earth Trust.

It is also the case that Option 1 could well result in the loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, i.e. land that is grade 1, 2 or 3a. The low resolution nationally available agricultural land quality map serves to suggest that land surrounding Long Wittenham is likely to be grade 2 quality; however, it is noted that land adjacent to the west of the plan area (namely the land that comprises the committed North East Didcot strategic site) has been surveyed in detail and found to comprise land that is of grade 3b, i.e. to comprise land that is *not* of best and most versatile quality.

Having made these initial points, the following is a summary of assessment findings -

- Biodiversity - A primary concern 'Hayward's Eyot' Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is situated adjacent to SHELAA site 1052, which could be impacted as a result of a scheme comprising several hundred homes and a new community hub. However, there would be good potential for effective avoidance and mitigation, noting that the part of the site that lies adjacent to the LWS is within the floodplain, and hence would almost certainly be left undeveloped.
- Climate change - both options contain areas that are susceptible to surface water flood risk, but this is more of an issue for SHELAA site 1052, and it is also the case that a significant portion of the site is located within an area of fluvial flood risk. It is likely that the developable area would avoid areas of risk, and surface water flood risk can be mitigated with Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); however, it is appropriate to take a sequential approach to site selection, with sites at lower risk selected ahead of sites at higher risk, as far as possible. On this basis, significant negative effects are predicted for Option 2.

- Landscape - the current LWNP (2017) recognises the importance of viewing corridors across the Didcot Road site (Option 1), towards Wittenham Clumps; however, the situation has now changed, due to Fieldside having gained planning permission for 36 homes, and it is also anticipated that there will be good potential to mitigate impacts through careful layout and design measures. With regards to Option 2, the scheme would be of a much larger scale, and this is a sensitive landscape in that it forms a gap between Long Wittenham and Didcot Garden Town, which is expanding (as explored in detail in the Evidence Paper – Countryside).<sup>12</sup> Some form of landscape gap could be retained, within the site; however, the gap would be eroded significantly. It is thought likely that this landscape gap is of importance not just to residents of Long Wittenham, but also in the sense that it forms part of the vista from Didcot Garden Town and Shire's Hill and forms part of the setting of the AONB.
- Historic environment - neither site contains designated heritage assets; however, both are adjacent to areas of sensitivity, with SHELAA site 1052 adjacent to a large Scheduled Monument ('Settlement Site SE of Church'), and Didcot Road close to the Long Wittenham Conservation Area (though buffered by the site which has recently gained planning permission). As such, it is difficult to differentiate the alternatives in terms of historic environment / heritage impacts. There would likely be good potential to avoid/mitigate effects at the planning application stage.

Another consideration relates to archaeology, with both sites potentially being sensitive in this respect. Historic England has raised concerns over the potential for development to affect archaeological remains at the Didcot Road site in Option 1; due to indications in OS maps that the site is also the site of an Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground; whilst Landowner representations for Site 4, which is a component part of the larger SHELAA Site 1052, indicate that the site is known to contain archaeology "from the Prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon through to the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods". However, it is difficult to suggest that the site is a barrier to development, given an assumption that there would be full investigation, and the necessary steps taken towards preservation.

- Land, soil and water resources - Option 2 would involve a larger scheme, and hence could result in significantly greater loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land; however, land adjacent to the west of SHELAA site 1052 has been surveyed and been found to comprise land that is not 'best and most versatile'. The larger scheme under Option 2 also has the potential for residual minor negative effects as a result of significant land take hindering future access to mineral resources in the Plan area (soft sand).
- Population and community - there a number of considerations -
  - Growth proposed through Option 2 has the potential to significantly affect the character of the village and its community identity, not only by potentially doubling the size of the settlement (contrary to the Settlement Hierarchy proposed through the Local Plan), but also by significantly reducing the area of land that separates Long Wittenham and Didcot.
  - Option 2 would locate the community hub at the western extent of the village, which is a less accessible location, albeit it would be easily accessible to residents of the exiting housing area at the western edge of the village. Conversely, Option 1 would deliver the new hub at a central location, such that it would effectively form a focal point for the village.
  - Whilst the larger scale growth proposed through Option 2 would provide more new homes for the local community, it is unlikely that community infrastructure would be provided over-and-above Option 1.
- Health and Wellbeing - there is little to add beyond that discussed above, under 'Population and community', although it is noted that a bridleway passes through SHELAA site 1052, which is likely to be a popular walking route for residents of Didcot Garden Town, as they look to access the surrounding countryside. Either scheme would deliver new sports facilities and open space.
- Transportation - there is little to add beyond that discussed above, under 'Population and community'. Didcot Road (Option 1) is the more accessible location.

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<sup>12</sup> Andrea Pellegram (2018) Evidence Paper - Countryside

## 7. Developing the preferred approach

- 7.1 This section presents the Parish Council's reasons for developing the preferred approach in light of alternatives assessment. The Parish Council has stated -

*"The preferred option is Option 1, which accords fully with the alternatives assessment findings.*

*The Didcot Road site has been made available at a discounted rate to deliver the hub proposal and, in conjunction with Community Infrastructure Levy investment, would deliver the same level of infrastructure as a much larger scheme to the west of the village.*

*A large scheme to the west of the village (Option 2) is not supported. Such a scheme would significantly increase the built footprint of the village to an extent that exceeds that outlined by the Local Plan, and challenge the policy provisions within the Local Plan which seek to limit growth in this 'Smaller Village'. The delivery of such growth would significantly change the character and identity of the village, and a new community hub in this location would not be effective. It is also considered that the loss of the open countryside gap, between Long Wittenham and Didcot, would be contrary to Didcot Garden Town objectives."*

Part 2:  
What are the  
SEA findings  
at this stage?

## 8. Introduction to Part 2

8.1 This part of the report presents an assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Methodology

8.2 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.1) as a methodological framework.

8.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g. in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously, and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.

8.4 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e. the potential for the RLWNP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

## 9. Assessment of the plan

### Introduction

9.1 The assessment is presented below under seven topic headings, one for each of the SEA objectives identified through the scoping exercise as discussed in Chapter 3.

### Biodiversity

#### Commentary

9.2 There are no European or nationally designated sites for biodiversity within the Plan area. However the Little Wittenham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located just outside of the Plan area in the east, and the entire Plan area falls within this sites associated SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ). In the local context, there are also two Local Wildlife Sites located in the north / north-east of the Plan area.

9.3 The allocations within the RLWNP are not identified within the IRZ as types of development that could require further consultation with Natural England. Further to this, the allocations within the RLWNP for housing and delivery of the community hub proposal are not located within or in close proximity to either of the locally designated wildlife sites.

9.4 The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) provides policy protections for biodiversity. Particularly Policy CSB1 (Conservation and improvement of biodiversity) seeks to avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively supports opportunities for net gain; including through measures such as connecting sites, habitat restoration and habitat re-creation. This is supported by Policy CSG1 (Green infrastructure) which further seeks to avoid a net loss of green infrastructure, and

can help to maintain / improve habitat connectivity. The Core Strategy identifies a Conservation Target Area in the north / north-east of the Plan area, and whilst the allocations within the RLWNP are not located within this area, it is considered that any development in the village should aim to support the integrity and connectivity of ecological networks in the plan area.

- 9.5 The emerging Local Plan will similarly provide such protections once it is adopted and replaces the Core Strategy. Namely emerging policies ENV2 (Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species) and ENV3 (Biodiversity – Non designated sites, habitats and species) will provide protections for designated sites, Priority Habitats and Species as well as non-designated sites, habitats and species. The policies expect no net loss of biodiversity as a minimum standard, seeking a net gain where possible. Policy ENV3 asserts that '*planning permission will only be granted if impacts on biodiversity can be avoided, mitigated or compensated*'.
- 9.6 The policy provisions of the higher level planning framework, including further provisions provided through the NPPF, will ensure that development will not lead to any significant negative effects on biodiversity.
- 9.7 At the local level, the production of the RLWNP provides the opportunity to identify and offer greater protection for locally identified areas of biodiversity importance. In this respect, the RLWNP includes Policy LW11 (Ecologically Sensitive Areas) which identifies an Ecological Sensitive Area to the south of Fieldside. The policy requires development to fully assess potential ecological impacts and propose mitigation (specifically seeking the creation and linking of habitats) when it is likely to affect either this Ecological Sensitive Area or the Little Wittenham SAC/SSSI. The identification and protection of locally important biodiversity is considered likely to lead to long term minor positive effects for this SEA theme.
- 9.8 Further to the direct effects of policy outlined above, there is also the potential for minor positive indirect effects. High quality design promoted through Policy LW7 (Heritage and Design), along with the protection of the countryside surrounding the village (Policy LW4 Countryside) give indirect support for biodiversity by offering further protection of landscape features and natural spaces that contribute to ecological connectivity.

## Conclusion

- 9.9 Overall it is considered that existing policy provisions afforded by the higher level NPPF and Local Plan will ensure that development does not lead to any significant negative effects on biodiversity. The RLWNP enhances biodiversity protections at the local level, including through the identification of protection of an 'Ecologically Sensitive Area', and is considered to support ecological connectivity on the whole.

## Climate change

### Commentary

- 9.10 Within South Oxfordshire, the industry and commercial sector is identified as the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The RLWNP does not propose any further employment development, and as such is not considered likely to exacerbate the negative effects associated with industry and commercial emissions.
- 9.11 The housing growth proposed through the Plan will inevitably increase the built footprint of the plan area, and increase greenhouse gas emissions in the domestic sector to some degree with the potential for minor long term negative effects. Policy provisions within the emerging Local Plan, in particular Policy DES8 (Efficient use of resources) seek to ensure that development maximises 'passive solar heating, lighting, natural ventilation, energy and water efficiency' which will minimise the potential negative effects.
- 9.12 The allocations within the RLWNP are located centrally in the village in close proximity to the High Street and the limited public transport connections that exist within the Plan area. The limited quantum of development proposed through the RLWNP is unlikely to deliver significant

improvements in terms of public transport provisions within the Plan area, and it is considered likely that residents will continue to travel outside of the Plan area to access a wider range of services and facilities. Therefore, development is considered likely to lead to minor long term negative effects in this respect.

- 9.13 To combat the potential negative effects the RLWNP does seek to promote the use of walking and cycling routes where possible. Policy LW9 (Cycle and Footpaths) requires development contributions towards cycle and footpath proposals (as contained within the Evidence Paper: Cycle and Footpaths) and in particular, Policy LW1 (Community Hub) seeks to link new cycle and footpaths with the wider network in the proposed development of the community hub. The proposed allocations can easily provide connections to National Cycle Route 5 which runs along High Street and Little Wittenham Road, with the potential for minor positive effects in this respect.
- 9.14 The policy provisions provided through the RLWNP are supported by the higher level policy framework. In particular Policy TRANS2 (Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility) in the emerging Local Plan seeks to 'ensure new development is designed to encourage walking and cycling, not only within the development, but also to nearby facilities, employment and public transport hubs' and Policy TRANS5 (Consideration of Development Proposals) identifies a range of requirements for development proposals including; providing safe and convenient routes for cyclists and pedestrians; being accessible by public transport; having a safe walking route to nearby bus stops; and providing for appropriate public transport infrastructure. Taken together, the policy provisions should maximise the potential for sustainable transport connections in new development.
- 9.15 The RLWNP does not include any provisions relating to renewable energy production, however Policy DES10 (Renewable Energy) within the emerging Local Plan promotes renewable energy generation at all scales including domestic schemes providing they do not cause significant adverse effects on landscape, biodiversity, the historic environment, visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt, the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians and residential amenity.
- 9.16 The provisions of the NPPF will help address potential flood risk issues in the Plan area, supported by policies contained within the extant Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan, in particular emerging Policy EP4 (Flood Risk). In terms of the allocations within the RLWNP, none are located within an area of fluvial flood risk. The hub allocation site however is known to contain areas which are susceptible to surface water flood risk, and in this respect it is recommended that Policy LW1 (Community Hub) includes the requirement for on-site sustainable drainage systems to reduce the potential for negative effects.

## Conclusion

- 9.17 Given the existing limited public transport connections within the Plan area, and considering the low quantum of development proposed through the RLWNP, it is not considered likely that the allocations within the RLWNP will deliver any significant improvement to transport infrastructure. It is considered likely that residents will continue to travel outside of the Plan area to access a wider range of services, facilities and employment opportunities, and in this respect it is considered likely that there will be a continued reliance on the private car. The development proposed through the RLWNP is therefore considered likely to lead to long term minor negative effects in terms of emissions. To address this, the RLWNP seeks to maximise the potential for pedestrian and cycle access.
- 9.18 Whilst the appraisal has not identified any significant issues in relation to flood risk, it is recommended that Policy LW1 includes the requirement for on-site sustainable drainage systems to reduce the risks associated with surface water flooding at the community hub allocation site.

## Landscape and historic environment

### Commentary

- 9.19 As a rural area, the RLWNP seeks to protect the character of the Plan area and village identity. The use of a 'Green Gap' as part of a countryside policy (Policy LW4) will limit development and direct growth towards the village and east of the Plan area. This will support landscape character and village identity by maintaining a countryside gap (thus reducing the potential for coalescence) between Long Wittenham and the urban area of Didcot in the west.
- 9.20 The countryside policy further identifies considerations for development outside of the 'Green Gap' to protect the wider countryside setting, including; limiting housing development, supporting rural diversification (supporting long term vitality and viability of the rural economy), protecting tranquillity, protecting and enhancing the River Thames Corridor, urban fringe landscaping and green infrastructure improvements. With the existing designated landscapes of the AONB in the south of the Plan area and designated Green Belt in the north, the Countryside policy complements the protections afforded to the landscape. The policy provisions are considered to support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area, in line with the objectives of the AONB and thus supporting its setting, with the potential for long term positive effects.
- 9.21 In terms of the allocations within the RLWNP, it is recognised that the proposed community hub site at Didcot Road has the potential to affect key views towards the Wittenham Clumps (a key local landscape feature and part of the AONB). The proposed layout and design will be crucial to mitigating these potential effects and this is recognised by Policy LW1 which requires a masterplan and design brief in this respect, to be agreed with the local planning authority, parish council and all development partners. The RLWNP further proposes Policy LW8 (Protected Views) to protect key landscape views. The policy seeks to refuse development that would detrimentally impact upon identified key views to and from the Wittenham Clumps and views from Sire's Hill and Didcot Garden Town.
- 9.22 Historic England has also identified the potential for archaeological remains at the allocated site given map indications that the site is also the site of an Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground. Their response identifies that "*Historic England objects to allocation of this site [the community hub site in Policy LW1] for development without any detailed archaeological assessment*", further stating that "*such an assessment should be undertaken to establish whether or not it is appropriate to take the site forward to the next stage of the Plan*". The response continues to explain:

*"If that assessment identifies archaeological remains that would be harmed by the development of the site, the Parish Council should not progress the allocation of this site unless, exceptionally, there is clear and convincing justification in the form of overriding public benefits in accordance with paragraphs 194 – 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

*If the remains are of national importance demonstrably equivalent to scheduled monuments, then they should be considered to be subject to the same policies in the National Planning Policy Framework as scheduled monuments and designated heritage assets in accordance with footnote 63 on page 56 of the Framework.*

*This would mean that substantial harm to or loss of the remains should be wholly exceptional and only justified if it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (and which cannot be achieved in any other way), or all of the circumstances in paragraph 195 of the Framework apply. Even then, the development of the site, in this scenario, would mean that criterion B.e. could not be satisfied as a development that would harm the site's archaeological remains could not maximise their value.*

*Whilst we consider that archaeological assessment/investigation of the site should be undertaken to establish whether or not it is appropriate to take the site forward to the next stage of the Plan,*



*a less satisfactory alternative, if the Council still wishes to take it forward, would be to include a revised section B of the policy”*

- 9.23 As such it is recommended that appropriate archaeological assessment is undertaken prior to allocation of the site, or as an alternative, policy provisions are amended to reflect the need for archaeological assessment at the site – in line with Historic England advice.
- 9.24 In the wider context, designated and non-designated heritage assets, and their settings, are provided protection through the higher level policy framework. Extant Policy CSEN3 (Historic Environment) currently provides policy protections, and will be replaced by emerging Policies ENV6 (Historic Environment), ENV7 (Listed Buildings), ENV8 (Conservation Areas), ENV9 (Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments), ENV10 (Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes). The emerging policy suite is very comprehensive in terms of the historic environment, and as such any development within the Plan area is considered unlikely to lead to any significant negative effects.
- 9.25 The RLWNP recognises the local value of the historic environment in terms of cultural heritage, village identity and landscape character. The RLWNP proposes Policy LW7 (Heritage and Design) which identifies a number of considerations for new development, including; historic context, preservation and enhancement of all identified assets of value, whether designated or not, the conservation area, listed buildings, the War Memorial, Thames Path and Riverside, the countryside, protected views, local distinctiveness and sense of place, and historic built form of the village. The identification and consideration of locally valued aspects of the historic environment are likely to support conservation and enhancement in the long term with the potential for positive effects. However; it is still recommended that Policy LW1 is extended to include provisions for archaeological assessment at the allocated site prior to development.

## Conclusion

- 9.26 Overall it is considered that the RLWNP, alongside the higher level policy suite, provides a robust framework for the protection and enhancement of landscape character and the historic environment. Despite this, careful consideration will need to be given to landscape features (namely views towards the Wittenham Clumps) in the design and layout of the proposed community hub development at Didcot Road, and Policy LW1 should be revised to reflect the need for archaeological assessment.

## Land, soil and water resources

### Commentary

- 9.27 The development of the community hub (Policy LW1) will result in the loss of greenfield land with the potential for long term negative effects for this SEA theme, however; given the scale of the proposed development the effects are not considered likely to be of significance. In the absence of an Agricultural Land Classification, the national ‘Provisional Agricultural Land Quality’ indicates that the area could contain Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land, and as such, development is considered to have the potential for long term negative effects in this respect, however, there remains an element of uncertainty until site level assessments have been completed.
- 9.28 Policy LW4 (Countryside) seeks to restrict development within the countryside to a degree, and proposes a Green Gap in the west of the Plan area between Long Wittenham and Didcot. Whilst these measures are aimed at protecting landscape character and village identity, they will indirectly support the conservation of soil resources with the potential for minor long term positive effects.
- 9.29 The proposed development site under Policy LW1 is located within a Minerals Strategic Resource Area and Mineral Consultation Area. All the land surrounding the settlement is designated as such for its potential contribution to soft sand supplies. Development at the settlement edge is

unlikely to significantly hinder mineral extraction and development, which is highly unlikely to occur in such close proximity to the existing housing at the settlement edge. Further to this the Oxfordshire Minerals Local Plan is currently developing its Site Allocations Plan, and at Regulation 18 stage (consulting on the Issues and Options and including nominated sites for minerals development) no sites within Long Wittenham have been identified for further minerals development. A new quarry is nominated at Clifton Hampden, and an extension to the existing quarry at Sutton Courtenay is also nominated and these are identified as the closest nominated sites to the settlement. The provisions within the adopted Minerals Core Strategy (2017), in particular Policy M8, facilitate housing allocations proposed through Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, as well as demonstrate a preference for the majority of soft sand workings to be located within the Corallian Ridge (between Oxford and Faringdon), and a preference for extensions to existing sites over new quarry development. Given these findings it is considered unlikely that the development strategy proposed through the RLWNP will lead to any significant effects in terms of minerals sterilisation and it is also considered unlikely to significantly hinder future access to the mineral resource in this area. Further to this, Policy M8 requires the District Council to consult with the County Council on planning applications for non-mineral development within Mineral Consultation Areas, as such any planning application at the proposed development site under Policy LW1 will be subject to consultation with the Oxford County Council.

- 9.30 The Plan area borders the River Thames in the north and east, and catchment data<sup>13</sup> identifies that in 2016 the Thames (Evenlode to Thame) river catchment was considered to be of moderate ecological quality and failed for its chemical quality. The allocations within the Plan are not located in an area, or of a type that is considered likely to lead to any significant negative effects on water quality. Further to this the RLWNP seeks to 'preserve and enhance' the Thames Path and Riverside as part of design policy LW7. This is supported by the higher level policy framework, in which specifically emerging Policy INF4 seeks to ensure that development does not decrease water quality.

## Conclusion

- 9.31 Overall the proposals within the RLWNP are considered likely to result in long term minor negative effects for this SEA theme as a result of the loss of greenfield land, and potentially best and most versatile agricultural land (although there remains an element of uncertainty in regards to the actual agricultural land classification at this stage).

## Population and community

### Commentary

- 9.32 The planning permission granted to the 'Fieldside' allocation in Policy LW4 will deliver over and above the housing requirement for the Plan area as outlined by the emerging Local Plan. Alongside the proposed enabling housing (supporting the viability of the community hub) this will provide for housing growth to meet and exceed the identified local needs with the potential for long term positive effects for this SEA theme.
- 9.33 The RLWNP promotes a mix of housing types and tenures to meet local needs through Policy LW5 (Housing Mix), including the delivery of affordable housing in line with the requirements set by the higher level Local Plan, with the potential for long term positive effects for communities and quality of life.
- 9.34 One of the main aims of the RLWNP is to deliver the community hub scheme in a more accessible location. This is likely to lead to long term positive effects for this SA theme by improving both the accessibility and quality and function of key services and facilities, including the local school,

<sup>13</sup> Environment Agency (2016) Catchment data explorer [online] available at: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039030334> [accessed 27/07/18]

pre-school, shop/market, and sports facilities (with associated parking for the scheme). The scheme is considered likely to lead to long term positive effects in this respect.

- 9.35** The RLWNP further seeks to protect village identity through Countryside Policy (LW4) which includes the designation of a 'Green Gap'. The Green Gap will reduce the potential for coalescence between Long Wittenham and Didcot and conserve the countryside surrounding the village, providing long term support for village identity and positive effects for local communities. The countryside policy further seeks to restrict the type of development occurring in the countryside, supporting development of rural diversification, tourism, recreation and agriculture. The policy therefore provides protection for the rural economy, thus supporting the economic vitality of the area which will indirectly support the communities within.

## Conclusion

- 9.36 Overall, the housing needs within the Plan area are likely to be met and exceeded, and the type of housing being developed is likely to support the various needs of the local community (including through affordable housing provisions). Further to this the RLWNP seeks to improve local service and facilities provisions in terms of their quality and function as well as their accessibility, and support long term viability and vitality of the rural economy, which will benefit the local community in the long term. Overall, the proposals contained within the RLWNP on the whole are considered likely to lead to long term significant positive effects for the local community.

## Health and wellbeing

### Commentary

- 9.37 No significant issues in relation to health are identified through the baseline, and the RLWNP does not focus on improvements in terms of health indicators. Despite this the RLWNP is still considered likely to contribute to improved health and wellbeing overall through various aspects of the Plan.
- 9.38 There is a strong focus within the RLWNP on the redevelopment and relocation of key services and facility provisions to improve their quality, function and accessibility. The community hub allocation (Policy LW1) seeks to provide new sports facilities which will enhance the available provisions within the Plan area with the potential for long term positive effects for health and wellbeing in terms of providing for healthy lifestyles.
- 9.39 This is supported by the delivery of new housing (Policies LW1, LW2 and LW3) of differing types and tenures (a housing mix is asserted through Policy LW5) to meet local needs and protect health through access to decent and affordable homes.
- 9.40 The protection and enhancement of incidental green spaces in the Plan area through Policy LW7 (Heritage and Design), alongside Green Infrastructure policies within the higher level plan (e.g. emerging Policy ENV5) is also considered likely to support health and wellbeing in the long term, by providing residents with access to natural spaces.

### Conclusion

- 9.41 Overall the RLWNP is considered likely to lead to minor long term positive effects for this SEA theme, mainly through enhanced sports facility provisions, but also as a result of providing a range of new homes to meet local needs (including affordable homes) and through Green Infrastructure enhancements and protected access to natural spaces.

## Transportation

### Commentary

- 9.42 High car reliance is likely to continue as a key issue for the Plan area, given its rural nature and lack of sustainable transport connections in terms of bus and rail. The development proposed through the RLWNP is unlikely to lead to any significant improvements to transport infrastructure given the relatively small scale of the proposed schemes and it is considered likely that residents will continue to travel outside of the Plan area to access a wider range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. To combat these effects however, the RLWNP does place great emphasis on the improvement and enhancement of pedestrian and cycle paths (Policy LW9), in particular by capitalising on opportunities to connect the new hub development with the existing National Cycle Route along the High Street (Policy LW1). The relocation of key services and facilities to a central hub will also increase accessibility overall for the majority of residents with the potential for long term positive effects in this respect.
- 9.43 The emerging Local Plan safeguards land in the west of the Plan area to deliver strategic improvements schemes and emerging Policy TRANS3 identifies design parameters for development within safeguarded areas, and will not permit development that may prejudice the transport proposals. The RLWNP does not allocate development within this area, and as such is unlikely to lead to any negative effects on the delivery of transport improvement schemes in the area.

### Conclusion

- 9.44 Overall, it is considered likely that high car reliance will continue to be a key issue for the Plan area, and the proposals within the RLWNP are unlikely to deliver significant improvements in this respect. However, the RLWNP maximises the potential to connect development with existing pedestrian and cycle paths to promote these modes of travel where possible and convenient. The relocation of key services and facilities to a central hub location is also considered likely to improve accessibility overall for the majority of residents.

## Conclusions at this current stage

- 9.45 RLWNP policies will benefit the local community through; the redevelopment and relocation of key service and facility provisions to meet local needs in a more accessible location; the delivery of new housing to meet local needs; protection of the surrounding countryside; a reduced potential for coalescence with Didcot; local heritage protection; and the protection of green spaces. The community hub proposal in particular is considered likely to lead to long term significant positive effects for the community.
- 9.46 It is recognised that the Plan is relatively limited in the potential to improve local transport infrastructure through new development, however capitalising on opportunities to connect the existing pedestrian and cycle network with the new hub, which will serve a large number of the residents, is considered likely to lead to positive effects for both 'transport and accessibility' and 'community health and wellbeing'.
- 9.47 No significant negative effects have been identified, however; it is recognised that there is the potential for minor long term negative effects through; the loss of greenfield land and potentially high quality soil resources; and a continued reliance on the private vehicle as residents are likely to continue to travel outside of the Plan area to access a wider range of services, facilities and employment opportunities.
- 9.48 Recommendations are also made for Policy LW1 to include the requirement for on- site sustainable drainage systems to reduce the potential for negative effects in relation to surface water flood risk, and to include the requirement for archaeological investigation and assessment prior to any development at the site.

Part 3:  
What are  
the next steps?

## 10. Introduction to Part 3

10.1 This part of the report explains next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

### Plan finalisation

10.2 At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the South Oxfordshire District emerging Local Plan and extant Core Strategy. This Environmental Report is required in demonstrating that the Basic Conditions have been met.

10.3 If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by South Oxfordshire District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for South Oxfordshire District, covering the defined Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### Monitoring

10.4 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the RLWNP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

10.5 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by South Oxfordshire District Council as part of the process of preparing its Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

10.6 The RLWNP commits the Parish Council to assessing performance of the plan every 12 months, with a fuller review of performance every five years. This is supported; however, we note that no particular objectives are identified as being worthy of particular close review.

10.7 In light of the assessment presented above (Chapter 9), it is certainly fair to suggest that delivery of the new community hub should be a focus of monitoring efforts. First and foremost, there is a need to monitor progression of a planning application for the scheme, and then there will be a need to closely monitor the nature of the scheme that emerges. Issues to consider will include visual / landscape impacts (in the knowledge that there might be some (limited) potential to take actions to address impacts, e.g. through delivering additional screening vegetation). Surface water flooding could also warrant monitoring, in the knowledge that it might be possible to put in place some remedial actions, should problems arise.

# Appendix I: Regulatory requirements

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table A links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table B explains this interpretation.

**Table A: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements**

		Questions answered	As per regulations... the Environmental Report must include...
<b>Introduction</b>		What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes</li> </ul>
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
		What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan</li> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
		What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Part 1</b>	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach)</li> <li>The likely significant effects associated with alternatives</li> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 2</b>	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan</li> <li>The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 3</b>	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A description of the monitoring measures envisaged</li> </ul>	

**Table B: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with regulatory requirements**

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>	
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>	
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues &amp; objectives?</i>
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> <b>[Part 1 of the Report]</b>
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.	
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> <b>[Part 2 of the Report]</b>
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> <b>[Part 3 of the Report]</b>



# Appendix II – The SEA Scope

## Introduction

Whilst Chapter 3 presents a summary of the SEA scope, in the form of the SEA framework, this appendix presents more detailed information. Specifically, this appendix presents a discussion of key issues and objectives under each of the SEA topic headings, also giving consideration to how the SEA scope was modified following consultation.

(What's the scope of the SEA?) the SEA scope is primarily reflected in a list of topics and objectives ('the SEA framework'), which was established subsequent to a review of the sustainability 'context'/ 'baseline', analysis of key issues, and consultation.

## Biodiversity

There are no biodiversity sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area which have been designated at a national, European or international level. This includes Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) although the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within SSSI Impact Risk Zones. In terms of locally designated sites there are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

A variety of Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats are present in the Neighbourhood Plan area, including Deciduous Woodland, Reedbeds, Lowland Meadows, and Good quality semi-improved grassland.

Key context documents include -

- EU Biodiversity Strategy (May 2011)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) (2012)
- The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)
- Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan (2015)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objective was established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

<p>Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species?</li> <li>• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li> <li>• Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity?</li> </ul>
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## Climate change

Any increases in the built footprint of the Long Wittenham neighbourhood plan area (associated with the delivery of new housing and employment land) has the potential to increase overall greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, data has shown that between 2005 and 2015 South Oxfordshire has had higher industry and commercial per capital emissions than the South East of England and England. However, domestic and transport emissions per capital in South Oxfordshire have been lower than in the South East of England and England during the period from 2005 to 2015.

In terms of flood risk, there are areas of land, particularly in the north, east, and central parts of the neighbourhood plan area, which are located in Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3. Surface water flood risk is higher in the northern, eastern and central areas of the neighbourhood plan area, particularly around the River Thames.

The Long Wittenham neighbourhood plan should seek to increase the neighbourhood plan area's resilience to the effects of climate change by supporting and encouraging adaptation strategies.

Key context documents include -

- UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report (2017)
- Climate Change Act (2008)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- Flood and Water Management Act (2010)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objectives were established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?</li> <li>• Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?</li> <li>• Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources?</li> <li>• Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?</li> </ul>
Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that inappropriate development does not takes place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change?</li> <li>• Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?</li> <li>• Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)?</li> <li>• Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area?</li> <li>• Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?</li> </ul>

## Landscape and historic environment

The Long Wittenham neighbourhood plan area falls within the 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA. The upper Thames Clay Vales NCA is described as a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland on predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site falls within the NCA, along with around 5,000 ha of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and smaller areas of the Chilterns AONB and the Cotswolds AONB.

The neighbourhood plan area has a rich historic environment, recognised through the 39 Listed Buildings, two Scheduled Monuments, and Long Wittenham Conservation Area.

The Settlement site at Northfield Farm is the only heritage asset within the Long Wittenham neighbourhood plan area currently on the Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

Key context documents include -

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England (2010)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objectives were established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

Protect, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage resource within the Neighbourhood Plan area, including the historic environment and archaeological assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the Long Wittenham Conservation Area and its setting?</li> <li>• Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of heritage interest?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance local diversity and character?</li> <li>• Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes?</li> <li>• Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies.</li> </ul>
Protect and enhance character and quality of land and townscapes, in particular the setting of the AONB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the integrity of local landscape character?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance landscape and townscape features?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the setting of the AONB?</li> </ul>

N.B. the 'landscape' objective and assessment questions were edited subsequent to the scoping consultation, to reflect comments received from **Natural England**. The relevant SEA objective has been amended and now reads as follows; 'Protect and enhance character and quality of land and townscapes, in particular the setting of the AONB'. The following assessment question has also been added; will the option/proposal help to conserve and enhance the setting of the AONB?

## Land, soil and water resources

The River Thames is the main watercourse flowing alongside the neighbourhood plan area. There is land classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land present in the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the neighbourhood plan area is also covered by a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone for surface water. The land surrounding the settlement edge is designated as a Minerals Strategic Resource Area and Mineral Consultation Area for its potential contributions to soft sand supplies.

Key context documents include -

- EU Soil Thematic Policy (2006)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England (2009)

- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objectives were established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land?</li> <li>• Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?</li> </ul>
Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the amount of waste produced and support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste?</li> <li>• Maximise opportunities for local management of waste in order to minimise export of waste to areas outside?</li> <li>• Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?</li> </ul>
Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support improvements to water quality?</li> <li>• Minimise water consumption?</li> <li>• Protect groundwater resources?</li> </ul>

## Population and community

Based on the most recent census data available, the population of the Neighbourhood Plan area decreased between 2001 and 2011, in contrast to the increases observed for South Oxfordshire, the South East of England, and England.

There is one Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) covering the Neighbourhood Plan area: E01028607: South Oxfordshire 006C, which is within the top 30% least deprived in England. Households within the neighbourhood plan area are relatively not deprived in comparison to district, regional and national averages.

In terms of house ownership, the majority of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area own a household either outright or by mortgage (80.56%). This is at a higher rate than the district, regional, and national averages. There is also a higher proportion of highly qualified residents in the neighbourhood plan area, and a high percentage of residents which work in the three highest occupational tiers. This again is compared with regional and national comparators.

Key context documents include -

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- The 'Ready for Ageing?' Report (2013)
- The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objectives were established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

<p>Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities; and reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities?</li> <li>• Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities?</li> <li>• Minimise fuel poverty?</li> <li>• Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents?</li> <li>• Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?</li> <li>• Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?</li> </ul>
<p>Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?</li> <li>• Support enhancements to the current housing stock?</li> <li>• Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?</li> <li>• Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?</li> <li>• Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?</li> </ul>

## Health and wellbeing

Overall health and wellbeing in the neighbourhood plan area is generally good. The majority of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area consider themselves to have 'very good health' or 'good health', higher than the totals for South Oxfordshire District, the South East of England and England. Additionally, a greater proportion of residents within Long Wittenham report that their activities are not limited by disability, compared to South Oxfordshire, the South East of England and England.

Key context documents include -

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- The 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- The Marmot Review (2011)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Report (2017)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objective was established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

<p>Improve the health and wellbeing residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups?</li> <li>• Address the specific challenges outlined in the Joint Health / Wellbeing Strategy?</li> <li>• Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards?</li> <li>• Reduce noise pollution?</li> <li>• Promote the use of healthier modes of travel?</li> <li>• Improve access to the countryside for recreational use?</li> </ul>
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## Transportation

In terms of public transport, there are no railway stations located within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The nearest is Appleford Train Station, located approximately 2km away. Additionally, the National Cycle Route 5 runs through the Neighbourhood Plan area. The reading to Oxford section of this cycle route passes through Wallingford, Didcot and Abingdon.

Over 94% of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area have access to a car or van, perhaps in part due to the rural setting of Long Wittenham. A high proportion of residents therefore use a car or van to get to work. This is higher than the district, regional and national percentages. As such, there are issues of peak time congestion within the village centre, particularly along High Street.

Key context documents include -

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
- Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan (2016)
- Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan

In light of this discussion, and supplementary discussion within the Scoping Report (2018), the following objective was established, along with a series of supplementary assessment questions -

<p>Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel?</li> <li>• Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?</li> <li>• Facilitate working from home and remote working?</li> <li>• Improve road safety?</li> <li>• Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?</li> </ul>
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## Appendix III: Site options assessment

This appendix presents the detailed findings of the assessment of available site options. The assessment has informed the establishment of reasonable alternatives, as outlined by Section 5, and specifically paragraph 5.10, of the main report.

**Table AIII-1** below presents the findings for the SEA of the potential site options for the delivery of the community hub scheme. For each SEA Theme (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand side rank the performance of site options, and also highlight sites that perform notably well, or poorly, using red / amber / green shading.

**Table AIII-1: SEA of site options**

SEA Theme	2: Didcot Road	3: Land off unmade road to east of village	4: West Field / Saxons Heath	5: West Field / Thames Path	6: Bodkins playing field	9: Land off High St / east of village	SHELAA Site 1052
<b>Biodiversity</b>	1	2	1	2	1	1	1

There are no internationally or nationally designated biodiversity sites within the Plan area, however; the Little Wittenham SSSI lies in the south (within Little Wittenham) and the whole Plan area fall within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for this site. However, the type of development proposed (the hub) is not likely to require further consultation with Natural England.

The 'made' LWNP designates an 'Ecologically Sensitive Zone' south of Fieldside where the habitats are home to the protected species 'Roman Snail' (*Helix pomatia*). The site option 'Land off unmade road to east of village' lies partially within this locally designated area, and in line with existing Policy LW6 from the 'made' LWNP development will require ecological impact assessment (to include proposed mitigation) prior to any development.

The north eastern border of the 'West Field / Thames Path' site option contains the BAP Priority Habitat - Deciduous Woodland which should be retained and enhanced in any development proposal for the site. SHELAA site 1052 is also located adjacent to this habitat and development should seek to protect the habitat with appropriate boundary management. The woodland is locally designated as Hayward's Eyot Local Wildlife Site (LWS). It is noted however that the LWS is located within a flood risk zone which reduces the potential for impacts as a result of development (as development is less likely to occur within a flood risk area).

<b>Climate Change</b>	2	1	2	4	2	3	4
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The site options 'West Field / Thames Path' and SHELAA site 1052 both lay partially within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3, and the site option 'Land off High St / east of village' is partially located within Flood Risk Zone 2 in the northern half of the site; significant mitigation may be required for development at these sites. Development could avoid flood risk areas, however; this will significantly reduce the developable area of the sites.

All of the sites, except for the site option 'Land off unmade road to east of village', contain small areas of land which are susceptible to surface water flooding. Mitigation, particularly the use of sustainable drainage systems, will be required to minimise the potential negative effects arising as a result of development at any of these sites. It is considered that there is the potential for a residual neutral effect following mitigation.

It is considered that all of the site options have the potential to include green infrastructure enhancement as part of any proposal for development. All sites therefore have the potential to positively contribute to the enhancement of green infrastructure networks in the Plan area.

Landscape and Historic Environment	3	4	2	1	1	1	2
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None of the site options are located within a nationally designated landscape. At the local level, key views to the AONB and specifically the Wittenham Clumps are identified along the southern side of the High Street (the informal byway known as Fieldside) and south along the eastern side of Didcot Road. Development at site options 'Didcot Road' and 'land off unmade road to east of village' have the potential to affect these views and design mitigation may be required to ensure that development minimises its impact on locally valued views, and maximises the potential to enhance access to these views.

None of the sites contain designated heritage assets, however development at the 'land off unmade road to east of village' site would be at the rear of the High Street which contains numerous Listed Buildings. Therefore development at this site has the potential to affect the setting of designated heritage assets either positively or negatively. The effects are largely dependent upon design and layout.

None of the site options are located within the Long Wittenham Conservation Area, however; all of the site options, except the majority of the SHELAA site 1052, lie adjacent or in close proximity to it and development is considered to have the potential to affect the designated heritage settings without sufficient mitigation. The effects could be positive or negative and are largely dependent upon design and layout.

At the SHELAA site 1052, the large Scheduled Monument 'Settlement Site SE of Church' lies adjacent to the western site boundary, and at Sites 6 and 9 the large Scheduled Monument 'Settlement Site at Northfield Farm' lies in close proximity. The potential effects are again largely dependent upon design, and it is considered that development at either site has the potential for both positive and negative effects, which will ultimately be shaped by design and heritage policies contained within the NPPF, Local Plan and revised Neighbourhood Plan.

Landowner representations for Site 4 (which will also apply to the larger SHELAA Site 1052) indicate that the site is known to contain archaeological evidence of a wide range of periods, from the Prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon through to the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. It is likely that archaeological investigation will be required prior to any development at these sites.

Historic England also indicate the potential for archaeological remains at Site 2 which could be affected by development (OS maps indicate the potential that the site is also the site of an Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground). As such, it is recommended that an appropriate archaeological assessment is undertaken prior to any development at the site.

Land, Soil and Water Resources	2	2	1	2	2	2	3
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Development at any of the site options will result in the loss of greenfield land with the potential for minor long term negative effects. None of the site options are known at this stage to contain best and most versatile agricultural land, however the baseline notes that there is the potential for loss of Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land identified at the national level. The negative effects are considered likely to be of greatest significance at the SHELAA site 1052 given the larger size of this site and thus greater loss of soil resources.

Development at any of the site options has the potential to incorporate measures, both during construction and operation, to minimise waste and manage waste according to the waste hierarchy.

The majority of sites (with the exception of sites 3 and 5) lie within a Minerals Strategic Resource Area and Mineral Consultation Area. All the land surrounding the settlement is designated as such for its potential contribution to soft sand supplies. Development at the settlement edge is unlikely to significantly hinder mineral extraction and development, which is highly unlikely to occur in such close proximity to the existing housing at the settlement edge, particular at the smaller sites. The provisions within the adopted Minerals Core Strategy (2017), in particular Policy M8, demonstrate a preference for the majority of soft sand workings to be located within the Corallian Ridge (between Oxford and Faringdon), and a preference for extensions to existing sites over new quarry



development. Given these findings it is considered unlikely that the development at any of the sites will lead to any significant effects in terms of minerals sterilisation however, given the size of Site 1052 there may be residual minor negative effects as a result of significant land take hindering access to the mineral resource in the wider area.

The 'West Field / Saxons Heath' site and SHELAA site 1052 both lie partially within a Drinking Water Protected Area and wholly within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone. The rest of the site options all lie wholly within both a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone and Drinking Water Protected Area.

<b>Population and Community</b>	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
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The site options are all potential locations (either alone or in combination) for the delivery of the community hub scheme which will enhance the community service and facility provisions in the Plan area, including a new school, pre-school, village hall, shop or market, and sports facilities. Therefore all site options have the potential for long term significant positive effects for the local community and future residents. These effects are likely to be of greatest significance at Site 2 and SHELAA site 1052 given the potential to deliver the scheme at one site and thus improve accessibility in this respect.

<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
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The site options are all potential locations for the delivery of the community hub scheme which includes improved sports facility provision to support healthy and active lifestyles. However, it should be noted that this positive effect would be negated by development at the 'Bodkins playing field' site which would result in the loss of existing leisure/sports facilities and thus not contribute to an overall increase in provisions.

<b>Transportation</b>	1	2	3	3	3	3	3
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All of the site options are located within or adjoining the settlement boundary. The site options 'Didcot Road' and 'land off unmade road to east of village' are located more centrally to the rear of High Street development on the south side of the road. Development at 'Didcot Road' could also build up the eastern side of Didcot Road, connecting with the planned development of 36 houses just north of the site, and existing residents on the western side of Didcot Road at Saxons Heath. Development at 'West Field / Saxons Heath', 'West Field / Thames Path' and SHELAA site 1052 would extend the settlement to the west, and make the community hub less accessible to those residents in the east of the settlement. Similarly, development at 'Bodkins playing field' or 'Land off High St / east of village' would extend the settlement to the east, and make the community hub less accessible to those residents in the west of the settlement.

## Appendix IV: Alternatives assessment

This appendix presents the detailed findings of the assessment of reasonable alternatives. This assessment has informed the development of the preferred option and links to Section 6 of the main report.

Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand side seek to both categorise the performance of each option in terms of ‘significant effects’ (using red / amber / green – no colour is used if no significant effect is considered likely) and also rank the alternatives in order of performance. Also ‘=’ is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par with each other (i.e. it is not possible to differentiate between them).

**Table 0.1: Summary alternative assessment findings**

SEA Theme	Option 1: Didcot Road	Option 2: SHELAA Site 1052
<b>Biodiversity</b>	1	2
<p>Whilst the entire Plan area falls within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the Little Wittenham SSSI, the type of development proposed (community hub / housing) is not likely to require further consultation with Natural England.</p> <p>Whilst it is considered that each option has the potential to incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures, it can also be considered that a higher level of housing development in a settlement increases the likelihood (and potential magnitude) of negative effects on designated sites in the vicinity of the village. This is linked to an increased likelihood of direct effects, such as from land take, disturbance or the loss of key features of ecological value, and an increased likelihood of indirect effects, such as from a reduction of ecological connectivity, and changes in land use patterns. In this context, Option 2 has greater potential for negative effects of a greater magnitude, with an element of uncertainty until site level details arise.</p> <p>Neither site is known to contain locally designated biodiversity assets, or known to contain any BAP Priority Habitats. However, it should be noted that a BAP Priority Habitat of Deciduous Woodland and Local Wildlife Site ‘Hayward’s Eyot’ is located adjacent to SHELAA site 1052 in the north of the site and development should seek to protect this area with appropriate boundary management. The Local Wildlife Site is located within a flood risk zone, which reduces the potential for impacts associated with development given national and local policy which seeks to avoid development in areas of flood risk.</p>		
<b>Climate Change</b>	1	2
<p>In regards to flood risk, both options contain areas that are susceptible to surface water flood risk and the extents of these areas are greater within the SHELAA site 1052. Mitigation will be required to reduce the potential for negative effects, including through the inclusion of sustainable drainage systems on site. A significant portion of the north and western parts of SHELAA site 1052 are also located within an area of high to medium fluvial flood risk, whilst development could avoid this area of the site, it will significantly reduce the developable area.</p>		
<b>Landscape and Historic Environment</b>	=	=
<p>It is not possible to be conclusive as to whether there will be significant negative effects on landscape character or the setting of the AONB associated with development proposed through the options, as the effect will largely be determined by the potential design of each development. A well-designed development which respects local character could have limited negative effects or even a positive effect on landscape character. Despite this, the previous ‘made’ LWNP recognises key local views which exist on the south side of High Street and east of Didcot Road, of which development at the Didcot Road site (Option 1) is most likely to affect, however; the extent of these effects are still ultimately dependent upon design. Larger scale growth proposed within Option 2 is also considered to increase the likelihood for and potential magnitude of negative effects, given the larger scale release of greenfield land in the countryside and setting of the AONB.</p>		

Although neither option contains designated heritage assets, both options are adjacent to areas with protected heritage interests. At the SHELAA site 1052, the large Scheduled Monument 'Settlement Site SE of Church' lies adjacent to the western site boundary, and at Didcot Road the Long Wittenham Conservation Area encompasses the High Street just north of the site (though separated by the site which has recently gained planning permission). The potential effects are again largely dependent upon design, and it is considered that development at either site has the potential for both positive and negative effects, which will ultimately be shaped by design and heritage policies contained within the NPPF, Local Plan and revised Neighbourhood Plan.

Landowner representations for Site 4 which also apply to the larger SHELAA Site 1052 assessed in Option 2 indicate that the site is known to contain archaeological evidence of a wide range of periods, from the Prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon through to the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. It is likely that archaeological investigation will be required prior to any development at these sites.

Historic England representations indicate the potential for archaeological remains at the Didcot Road site (Option 1) in the form of an Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground, and as such, it is also likely that archaeological investigation will be required prior to any development at this site.

Land, Soil and Water Resources	1	2
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Development at either of the options will result in the loss of greenfield land (of which the agricultural land grade is unknown at this stage, however the baseline notes the potential for Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land). Given the significantly greater land take proposed through Option 2, it is considered likely to lead to long term negative effects of a greater extent.

Both sites lie within a Minerals Strategic Resource Area and Mineral Consultation Area. All the land surrounding the settlement is designated as such for its potential contribution to soft sand supplies. With regards to the Didcot Road site (Option 1); small scale development at the settlement edge is unlikely to significantly hinder mineral extraction and development, which is highly unlikely to occur in such close proximity to the existing housing at the settlement edge. However, given the size of Site 1052 there may be residual minor negative effects as a result of significant land take hindering access to mineral resources in the wider area, and in this respect Option 1 is preferred.

Population and Community	1	2
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Whilst the larger scale growth proposed through Option 2 will provide more new homes for the local community compared to the dwelling potential at Option 1, it is unlikely to provide infrastructure over and above that proposed at the Didcot Road site (Option 1). The growth proposed through Option 2 has the potential to significantly affect the character of the village and its community identity, not only by providing growth that effectively doubles the size of the settlement (against the Settlement Hierarchy proposed through the Local Plan), but also by extending the settlement in the west and reducing the area of land that separates Long Wittenham and Didcot. Option 2 would further locate the community hub in the west of the village; whilst this will largely meet the needs of the potential new community, it will reduce accessibility to key services and facilities for some existing residents, rather than meeting the Plan aims of making the community hub uses more accessible.

Health and Wellbeing	=	=
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Both options will deliver new sports facilities which will provide continued support for healthy and active lifestyles with the potential for long term positive effects.

Transportation	1	2
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Both options seek to deliver community services and facilities within one hub location and will improve accessibility in this respect.

Option 1 is more centrally located and thus is more likely to improve accessibility overall for the majority of residents. Option 2 would further locate the community hub in the west of the village; whilst this will largely meet the needs of the potential new community, it will reduce accessibility to key services and facilities for some existing residents (particularly in the east of the Plan area), rather than meeting the Plan aims of making the community hub uses more accessible.

