

SCNDP

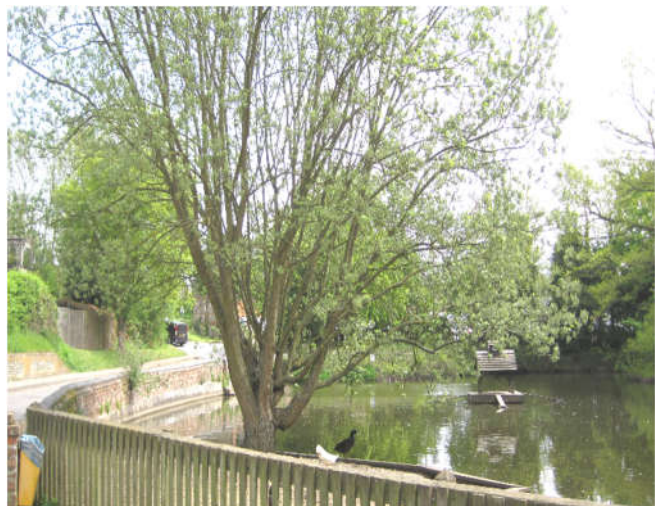
SONNING COMMON
NEIGHBOURHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Sonning Common
Neighbourhood
Development Plan

Final Submission
Referendum version

2012 – 2027



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Foreword

The future of our village – the way it grows and changes in years to come is of great concern to us all.

The Government's Localism Act of 2011, which aims to give local communities the right to have a vital say in how their area is developed, led to Sonning Common Parish Council's decision to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

By the beginning of 2012 a group of residents and parish councillors formed a working party to produce an NDP for Sonning Common. This group of volunteers has been working for 4 years to shape the future development of our village in a way that meets the needs, concerns and aspirations of our residents.

At its heart is the key issue of how many new homes should be built in the village, what kind of homes they should be, and where they should be built. We have been informed by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) that we need to provide for a minimum 138 new homes, and that is what we have done. We have also been advised that it is likely that this number will rise, and we have provided for that contingency by making provision for up to 195 new homes.

But the NDP is about more than housing. It covers other important issues, such as the viability of the village centre, parking and transport, the future of the schools, the library, the health resources, and the provision of leisure and recreation facilities. We have done our utmost to consider the welfare of the village and its people, as well as the sustainability of future housing developments.

During the last 4 years we have held many public meetings and exhibitions, held consultations with residents and asked them to complete surveys for us. We have also met with landowners, land agents, developers, local organisations and service providers as well as commissioning reports - all of which have produced the material and evidence contained in our Plan. In all of this, the support of the Parish Council and the Clerk's Office has been invaluable.

This is the Final Submission version of the Plan. It has been amended in accordance with the recommendations of the Examiner who also welcomed the depth and breadth of consultations with residents. This is a Plan which has been informed by and represents the views of the residents in and around Sonning Common.

Electronic copies of the Final Submission version and its supporting documents and reports can be found at: www.scpc-ndp.co.uk. Hard copies are available from: The Parish Office, Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common RG4 9SL. Phone: 0118 972 3616. Reference copies are also available at Sonning Common Library in Grove Road.

Sonning Common Parish Council thanks the members of the NDP Working Party for all their hard work and time since 2012. Without them and the support of our residents our NDP would not have been completed.

Barrie Greenwood
Chairman SCNDP Working Party

Douglas Kedge
Chairman, Sonning Common Parish Council

Part One: Setting the scene

Introduction

Preamble

A neighbourhood development plan (NDP) is a type of planning document designed to enable local communities to be closely involved and have more say in the development decisions which affect their parish or neighbourhood. The right of communities to prepare and establish neighbourhood plans was facilitated by the Localism Act 2011 and legislation came into effect in April 2012.

Purpose

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP and Stephen Williams MP, Department for Communities and Local Government, 7 November 2012, said:

“Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure they get the right types of development for their community. Using these tools communities will be able to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead”¹

People have often found it difficult to have a meaningful say in the planning process and more often than not are reacting to development proposals in isolation. Allowing communities to create policies against which development is assessed makes the planning system much more locally driven and responsive. However, it must be emphasised that such policies cannot block development and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

- South Oxfordshire District Council Core Strategy (2012)
- saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 (2006)

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is preparing a new Local Plan referred to as the Local Plan 2031, which is scheduled to be adopted in 2018.

¹ Source: www.planningportal.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning

Process

The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP) was commissioned by Sonning Common Parish Council with advice from SODC and help from external consultants. The costs of the neighbourhood plan are being met by the parish council and available grants from governmental sources.

A working party of residents (who volunteered) and parish councillors was established in January 2012. Consultants were appointed to assist the process. The Traffic Task Group formed in November 2012.

Designated neighbourhood area

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

The parish of Sonning Common comprises 1,595 homes and has a population of 3,784.³ It is located on the southern edges of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), some four miles north of the centre of Reading and three and a half miles west of Henley-on-Thames.

The Sonning Common parish boundary and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are illustrated on Map 1.1.

The SCNDP applies to the parish of Sonning Common and to parts of Kidmore End and Rotherfield Peppard parishes so that all the sites within SODC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) can be considered. The designated Neighbourhood Area (Map 1.2) covers:

- the parish of Sonning Common
- site SON 13, which is in the parish of Rotherfield Peppard
- site SON 4, which is in the parish of Kidmore End
- site SON 15, which was in the parish of Kidmore End and is now in Sonning Common

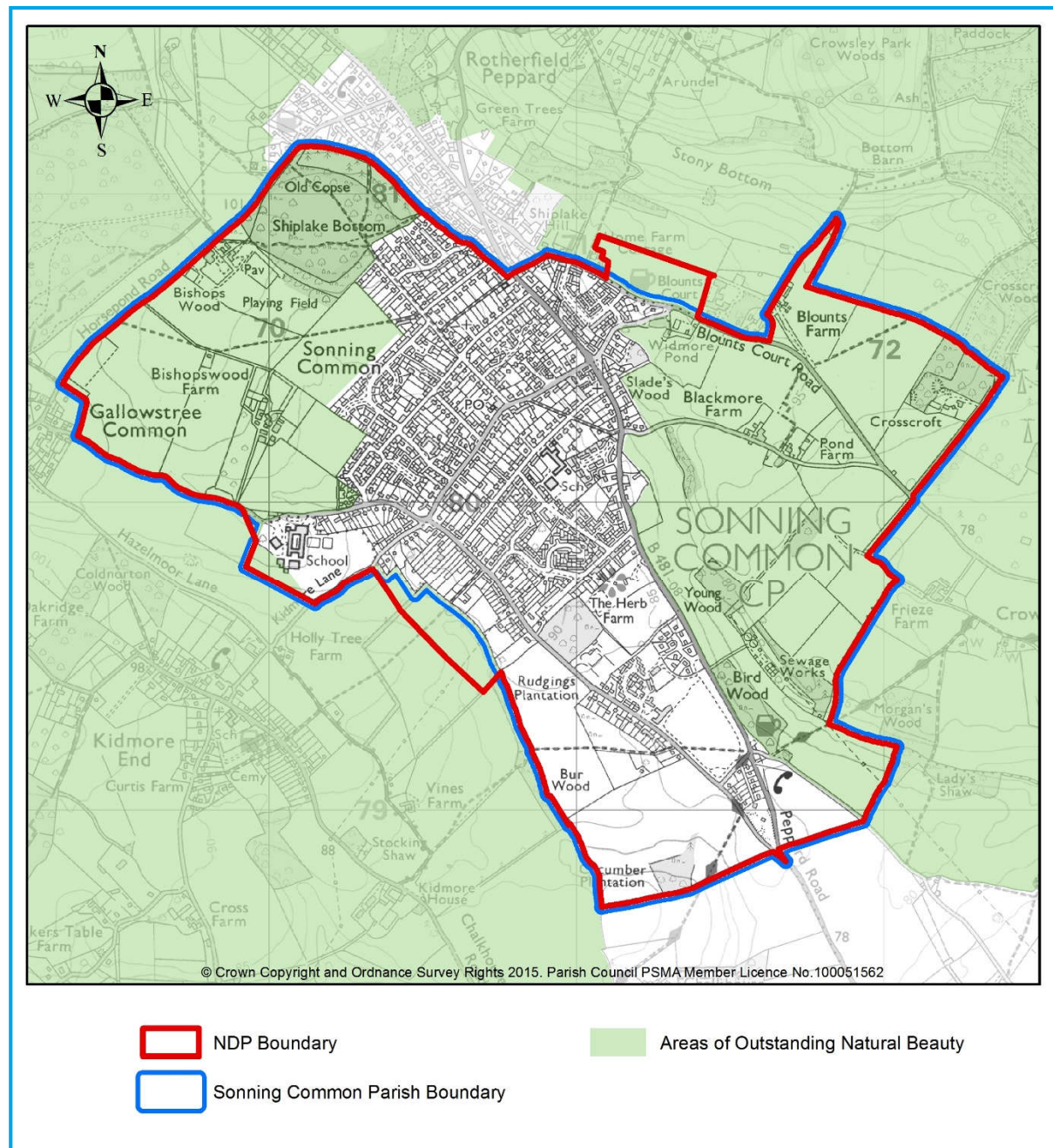
It should be noted that consideration of sites SON 13 and SONs 4 and 15 has been agreed by the respective parish councils of Rotherfield Peppard and Kidmore End.

Parish and town councils lead the creation of neighbourhood plans, supported by the local planning authority, which in the case of Sonning Common is SODC. Once written, the plan is independently examined and put to a referendum of local residents for approval.

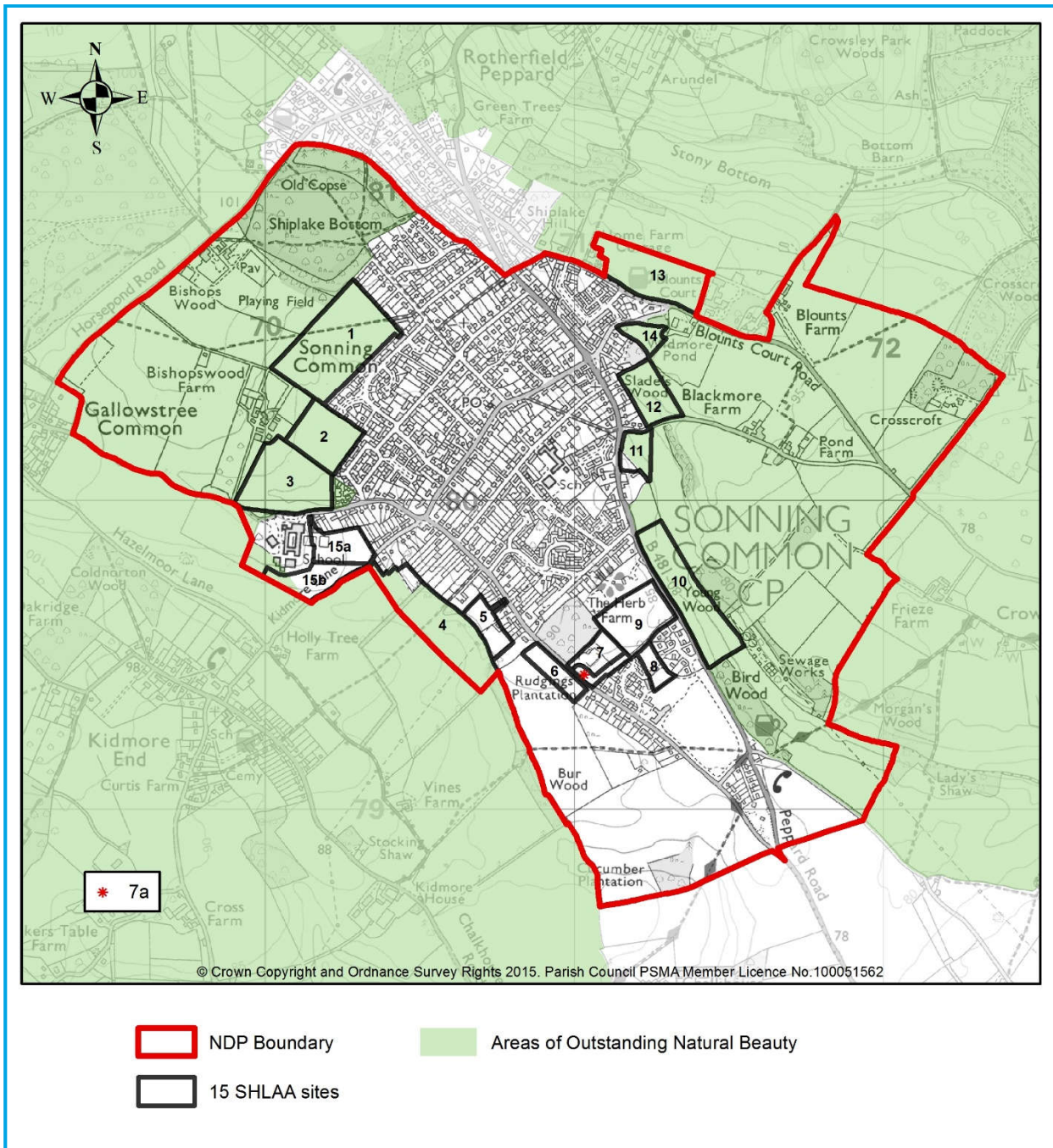
² Source: Sonning Common Neighbourhood Planning Area Consultation Statement, SODC, October 2013

³ Source: Census 2011

Map 1.1: Sonning Common parish boundary and Chilterns AONB



Map 1.2: SCNDP designated area and 15 SHLAA (SON) sites



SODC in its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identified 14 sites in and around Sonning Common which had been put forward by landowners/land agents as potentially available for development. A further site was added in 2013 to make a total of 15. The location of the 15 sites is found on Map 1.2. The SHLAA sites were assessed as part of the Plan process to see which ones were considered appropriate for development.

The Core Strategy made no formal allocation of a target number of homes to Sonning Common, but subsequent discussions with parish councils in the SODC area concerning the proposed distribution of 1,154 homes to the larger villages, concluded with a figure of 138 for Sonning Common for the period to 2027.⁴

Oxfordshire's 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the outcome of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 consultation could lead to an additional allocation of new homes to Sonning Common to 2031.

The SCNDP has been prepared by the working party and it will run concurrently with the SODC Core Strategy and the emerging plan until 31 March 2027. It is, however, a response to the needs and aspirations of the local community as understood today and it is recognised that current challenges and concerns are likely to evolve over the plan period.

Sonning Common Parish Council, as the responsible body for neighbourhood planning, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the SCNDP to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery.

Evolution

Narrative

There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood development plan to be prepared for Sonning Common. If such a plan is not prepared, Sonning Common residents would then lose the opportunity to ensure that development is neighbourhood specific and focusses on sustainability issues that have been considered through the extensive community engagement and involvement, which has been clearly demonstrated in the preparatory work done to date. To this end, the SCNDP will be particularly useful in helping to ensure that new development reflects the needs of the local community.

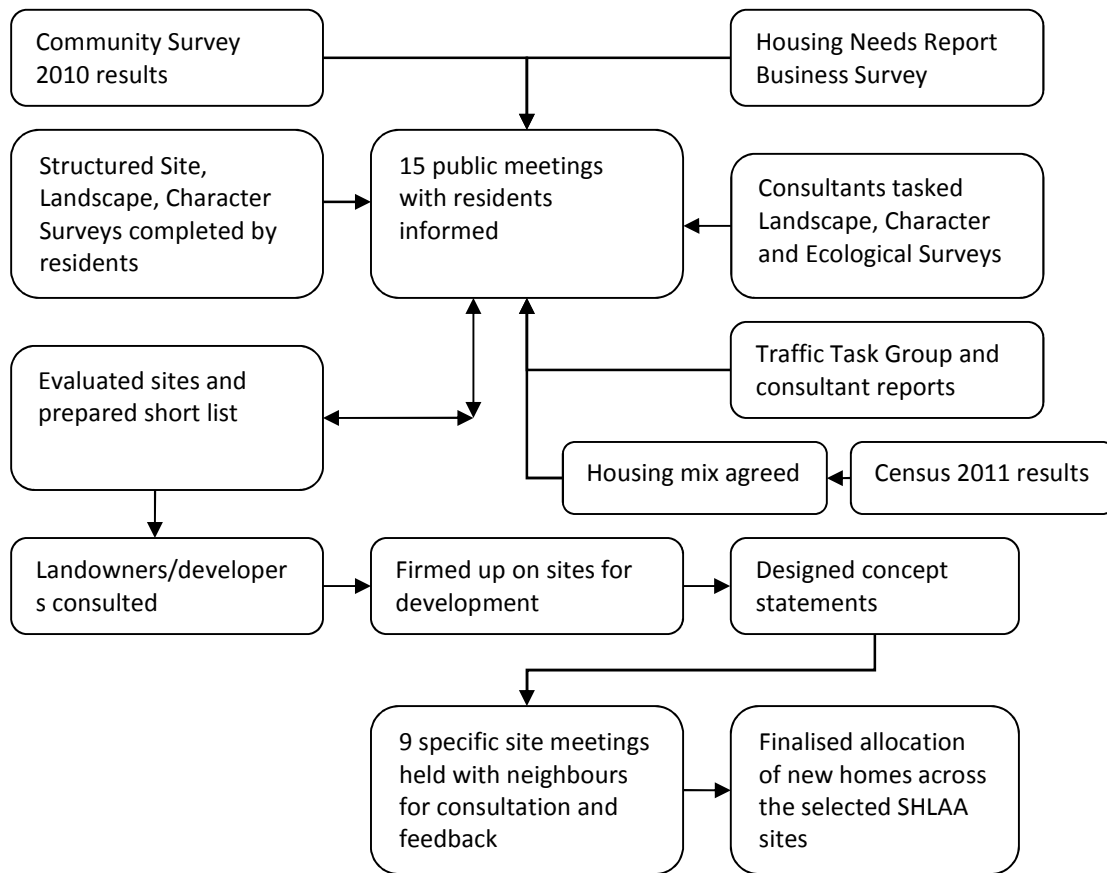
In November 2011 Sonning Common Parish Council took the decision to produce an NDP primarily to promote appropriate development on suitable sites which deliver benefit to the wider community and do not damage the distinctive and highly valued character of the village.

⁴ Source: www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013-06-24%20-%20Housing%20Distribution.pdf

Community involvement and consultation

From the outset community involvement has been the priority, commencing with a public event in April 2012 and proceeding with further regular public meetings. Our consultants provided structured survey formats, based on planning criteria, at the first NDP meeting in the village hall. These survey formats were then reviewed and modified (from the feedback) and residents were recruited to conduct structured site surveys of the designated SON1 to SON15 sites. 170 Site, Landscape and Character surveys were completed.



Figure 1.1: Data collection by and from residents and consultants

Evidence base

An evidence base was established and used to robustly support all the Policies in this NDP. That evidence base is referred to where necessary throughout the Plan and a list of key evidence is included in the appendices. The list provides links to external documents. All Sonning Common evidence is available on the website⁵ and it includes a comprehensive statement of community involvement. The following reports contributed to our evidence base:

- ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012
- Interim SCNDP Traffic Report (November 2012)
- Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013
- Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

⁵ Source: www.scpnc-ndp.co.uk

Sonning Common

Map 1.3: Sonning Common in South Oxfordshire ⁶



Sonning Common is a large village in South Oxfordshire, about four miles north of Reading centre and three-and-a-half miles west of Henley-on-Thames. It comprises 1,595 homes, and has a population of 3,784 (Census 2011). It is situated along the southern fringe of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in a rural landscape of rolling farmland and woodland. Its neighbouring parishes are Kidmore End to the west and Rotherfield Peppard to the north.

Its name is derived from the fact that it was originally the grazing, or common, land attached to the parish of Sonning, which is on the Thames to the south east. As recently as 1900 it consisted of no more than 40 houses on plots along Wood Lane, Woodlands Road and Baskerville Road. The settlement, defined by two dry valleys, the AONB and edged by the B481 and Kennylands Road, expanded slowly over the first half of the 20th Century so that by 1951 the population had grown to more than 1,400. At this point Sonning Common became a parish in its own right.

Thereafter it expanded steadily. During the 1960s and 1970s several new estates were built, as a result of which Sonning Common became one of the largest villages in South Oxfordshire.

⁶ Source: www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/adopted-policies-maps

Demographics

Sonning Common's overall population has remained static since the 2001 Census. However, the number of 0-44 year olds has fallen, the 45-74 age group is increasing slowly but the 75+ numbers are growing quickly. The 65-74 mix is 22% more than the SODC average, while the 75+ is 60% more.

The 18-34 year old age group is lower than average for SODC. However, the proportion of under 44s is still considerably more than the number of 45 -74 year olds, and the 35-65 age group is in line with SODC.

Population forecasts for the SODC area indicate a likely overall growth of 12% for the years 2006-2026, with the proportion of over 65s increasing by 45%. ⁷ The population is therefore trending towards an imbalance between young and old which will impact on the housing requirements and housing stock over the next 20 years. This appears in part to be a result of the boom in house building in the 1960s and 1970s, when many young families moved into Sonning Common and have subsequently chosen to stay in the village.

The demographic distribution information has informed the housing mix required for future homes.

Table 1.1: Sonning Common population 2001-2011 ⁸

Age band (years)	Census		
	2001	2011	Change
0-15	759	694	-9%
16-24	290	274	-6%
25-44	937	838	-11%
45-64	1004	1016	1%
65-74	422	450	7%
75+	366	512	40%
	3778	3784	0%
Mean age	42	45	
Median age	43	46	

Housing stock

Of the 1,595 homes in the village, around 50% are detached houses or bungalows, just over 30% are semi-detached houses and bungalows, 12% are terraced and the remainder are flats and maisonettes. More than 80% of the total is owner-occupied. This proportion is higher than elsewhere in South Oxfordshire, which is in itself above the national average in terms of owner-occupation. ⁹

⁷ Source: Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) data – Core Strategy 2012

⁸ Source: Census 2001 and 2011

⁹ Source: Census 2011

Census 2011 data highlights the imbalance of housing stock in Sonning Common. Table 1.2 shows that 1 bedroom households account for only 3.7% of Sonning Common households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC and 11.8% across England.

Table 1.2: Sonning Common households – bedrooms per occupied dwelling¹⁰

	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	SE England	England
1 bedroom	4%	8%	12%	12%
2 bedrooms	21%	24%	26%	28%
3 bedrooms	45%	40%	39%	41%
4 bedrooms	23%	21%	17%	14%
5+ bedrooms	7%	8%	6%	5%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes. This is much higher than the Oxfordshire and national averages.¹¹

Table 1.3 shows that the mix of Council Tax Bands in Sonning Common is weighted very strongly towards high end, larger properties.¹²

Table 1.3: Sonning Common Council Tax Bands

Bands	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	SE England	England
A-C	22.0%	39.3%	39.3%	66.2%
E-H	53.5%	37.7%	28.5%	18.5%

The ORCC housing needs report¹³ concluded that affordable (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate, such as shared ownership) housing ranked as the most important housing need. The lack of affordable housing restricted residents from moving within the village, forced others to leave and prevented families from living near each other.

¹⁰ Source: Census 2011

¹¹ Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)

¹² Source: ONS 2011

¹³ Source: ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

Facilities and services

Health

There is a health centre in the middle of the village with six doctors, three registrars, three nurses and a health care assistant serving a total of more than 8,500 patients from a wide area of South Oxfordshire. The patient register extends beyond Sonning Common (population of 3,784) and includes residents from neighbouring villages such as Binfield Heath, Gallowstree Common, Kidmore End, Rotherfield Peppard, Shiplake, and Tokers Green, as well as parts of Emmer Green and Caversham which are outside the district.¹⁴

Next to it is a dental surgery with three dentists, three hygienists and four nurses, serving 3,400 patients. The spread of patients outside the Sonning Common NDP area is of a similar mix to that of Sonning Common Health Centre.¹⁵

Abbeycrest Care Home, located at the southern end of Kennylands Road, offers residential, nursing and specialist dementia support and has 70 single rooms.

Education

Sonning Common has a primary school situated in Grove Road; 30% of pupils come from outside the village, mainly from Caversham. The school has a capacity of just below 420 pupils and currently there are 394 on roll. Chiltern Edge Secondary School is in Reade's Lane, and was within the parish of Kidmore End, although by agreement with Kidmore End Parish Council its site is included in the Sonning Common NDP designated area. After the boundary review in 2014 the school has become part of Sonning Common parish. It has just over 500 pupils, although its capacity is considerably more. Bishopswood Special School has locations at both the Primary and Secondary school in the village, with a pre-school in Gallowstree Common. There is also a Sonning Common pre-school.

Library

Since late August 2014 the library, which is located on the primary school site, has been run with one professional librarian assisted by a team of more than thirty volunteers, who work one shift every two weeks. The library continues to be open 25 hours a week, and is used by the public and the primary school. It offers book, DVD and audio book loans, access to the internet, magazines and newspapers, as well as Saturday story-time and craft activities for children.

Social

There is a police office in Lea Road, which is staffed by volunteers and Police Community Support Officers provide coverage for the area. The Friends in Sickness and Health (FISH) centre, which is in Kennylands Road, is staffed by volunteers who arrange car visits for the elderly to hospitals and other appointments. The charity owns a 17 seat bus in which volunteer drivers transport residents for shopping trips and on a variety of other outings.

¹⁴ Source: Sonning Common Health Centre – Practice Manager

¹⁵ Source: Wood Lane Dentistry – Practice Manager



The village hall in Wood Lane is recognised as the civic heart of Sonning Common

Village hall

The village hall was built in the 1970s and, although small and having only a single main hall, is extremely well-used for a wide variety of social activities as well as markets, auctions, concerts and other events. It has a small kitchen and also accommodates the office of the parish council's staff. It has limited facilities for the modern requirements of a community of our current size. It is efficiently run by a management committee, with capital spending funded by the parish council. Population growth since it was built has exacerbated the need for larger premises.

Within the parish there is Kidmore Memorial Hall on Reade's Lane which is available for hire for functions and activities. This hall is owned and run by the Kidmore Memorial Hall (KMH) Trust.

Recreation

Sonning Common has three play areas for children up to the age of 11, all of them well-equipped and maintained and regularly inspected. At the southern end of the village is the Millennium Green, an open area of natural grassland and trees, with paths and seats, and a designated natural habitat in the centre, much used by runners, walkers and dog owners. The green is owned by the Millennium Green Trust and run by the Trustees. The mown grass area is maintained by the parish council and the remainder by volunteers from Green Gym.

The village is surrounded by mainly beech woodland and countryside, which is popular for walks and picnics. Sonning Common is where the Health Walks project was started, in recognition of the lack of recreation for health provision. It was set up by Dr Bird, a former GP in the village and it aims to improve people's fitness, both in body and mind, by encouraging them to use their local countryside for walking. The health centre also initiated Sonning Common Green Gym to enable residents to regain and maintain fitness via conservation work in the local area. This group meets twice a week to work at various sites in South Oxfordshire, and is a thriving self-support voluntary organisation. It has now grown into a very successful scheme that has been adopted nationwide, and even internationally.

There is a shortage of sporting facilities within the SCNDP designated area. The only playing fields are privately-owned by Rotherfield United Football Club (RUFC), focussing on youth from 5-18 years with one adult pitch, and used exclusively for football. Sonning Common has no cricket ground, MUGA (multi-use games area) or sports hall. There are two tennis courts at Bishopswood (owned by RUFC) and a privately-owned gymnastics facility next to the Millennium Green.

Public transport and parking

A regular (every 30 minutes) and well-used bus service between Sonning Common and Reading runs along Peppard Road from the direction of Rotherfield Peppard, along Wood Lane and exits the village along Kennylands Road. Car parking in the village centre is a major issue; the only public car park (32 spaces) is behind the Co-op supermarket on the corner of Wood Lane and Woodlands Road and is often full. On-street parking along Peppard Road and Wood Lane is largely unregulated and frequently obstructs the free flow of traffic, particularly the buses.

Churches

There are three churches in the village with small halls or rooms for hire. All were built during the last century.



Christ the King
Church of England



St Michael
Catholic Church



Free Church

Retail

Sonning Common's retail centre grew up over three decades in a haphazard fashion without coherent shaping or planning. It has an exceptionally rich and varied range of retail outlets, including a busy small supermarket (Co-op), a butcher, a hardware shop with associated bicycle and machinery repair workshop, dry cleaners, sandwich shop/café, two newsagents, barber, off-licence, florist, two hairdressers, greetings cards/haberdashery, veterinary surgery, pet shop, an Indian restaurant, a fish-and-chip shop and a Chinese take-away.

The village also has three public houses, two estate agents, three car repair and servicing businesses, a petrol station and a car showroom. The Herb Farm, situated some distance from the village centre is a plant nursery, combined with a shop and a small café. There is a cashpoint in the One Stop convenience store on Wood Lane, which also includes the all-important post office. There was until recently a small branch of NatWest Bank on the Peppard Road but this has now closed.

Employment

Employment provision in the village centre is limited by the size of the retail space and or the type of the facility/service provided:

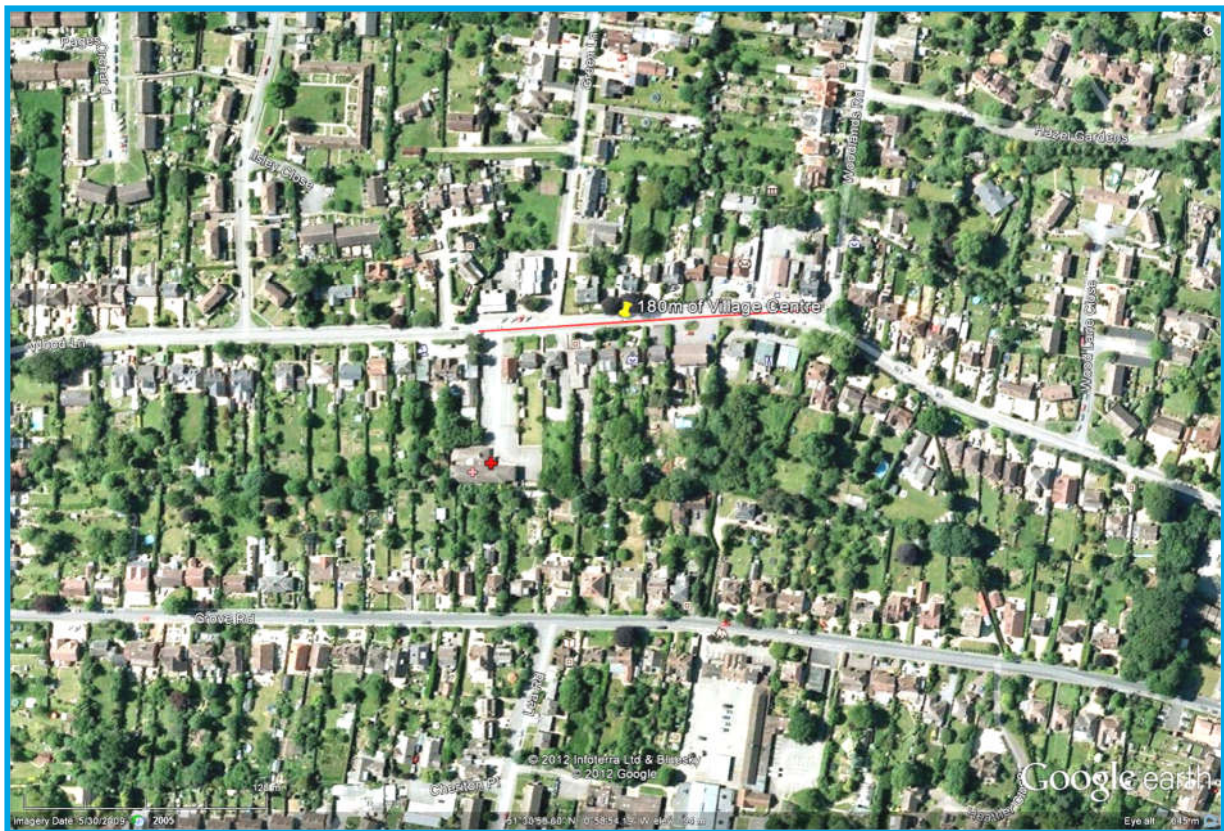
- Co-op supermarket has 13 employees
- 20 or so other outlets, the pubs and offices all employ small numbers
- Kidby's Yard, a small light industrial site off Kennylands Road, provides employment for 15 people
- Sonning Common Garage has three sites and employs more than 30 people
- The Herb Farm (garden nursery, shop and café) employs 8 FTE people
- three schools have 60, 59 and 37 staff respectively
- health centre and dental practice together employ around 23 people
- Abbeycrest Care Home has 80 employees (full-time and part-time)

For a village of its size with an adult population of 2,578 between the ages of 16 and 74 years (Table 1.1), these facilities provide a healthy level (c. 15%) of employment, some of which includes local residents.

The biggest employer in the 'wider' area by far is Johnson Matthey. Their technology centre, which employs 260 people, is actually just outside Sonning Common's parish boundary and the designated NDP area. Although the majority of employees do not live in Sonning Common, the company has a major influence on the village in terms of business for the retail centre and traffic flow. The rising cost of housing in the village has made it more difficult for employees to live closer to the organisation.

Character

Map 1.4: Aerial view of inner village ¹⁶



The comparatively recent development of Sonning Common means that it has a character very different from many other villages in South Oxfordshire which have much longer histories. It has very few historic buildings; there are only two listed buildings, ¹⁷ Pond Cottage and the adjacent barn in Blackmore Lane which are Grade II listed. It does, however, have Widmore Pond, with written records dating back to the 17th Century, and a large area of ancient woodland - Old Copse Wood, extending north from the end of Woodlands Road. There is a 16th Century home, Reddish Manor.

Its 'feel' – spacious, wooded, semi-rural – derives from the 'plotland' model of growth in which houses were built along the existing principal roads, usually with generous gardens. The Character Assessment and Design Statement commissioned in 2013 provides greater detail about the style of homes in Sonning Common. The Google map shows that its woodland character stretches through the very centre of the village and highlights the considerable number of trees.

There is little architecture of real distinction in the village, but there is a pleasing variety of building styles which gives each of the older roads and lanes a distinction and interest much valued both by those who live in them and the residents of Sonning Common as a whole.

The appearance from the 1960s onwards of some housing developments of a more generic and less locally distinctive style has affected the overall impression without seriously compromising it. There is very little of striking beauty in Sonning Common but, equally, very little that is downright ugly!

¹⁶ Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

¹⁷ Source: www.historicengland.org.uk

The affection that its people generally feel for the village is enormously enhanced by its setting. The countryside around is delightfully varied in the contrasts between open fields and woodland. There are splendid opportunities for walking and cycling and fine views, particularly across the dry valleys to the east and west. The village benefits from easy access to Reading and Henley, but its separation from both is of especial importance to the residents of Sonning Common.

Sonning Common is blessed in many ways. It is peaceful and pleasant but it is also full of life and activity. The busyness of the retail centres along Peppard Road and Wood Lane gives it real vibrancy. It is regarded by its residents as a great place to grow up in, to mature in and to grow old in. One of the chief aims of this Neighbourhood Development Plan is to protect and enhance the qualities that have made that possible.

When asked why people like living in Sonning Common, the two most commonly identified reasons were “people who smile” and the “community spirit.” This spirit has been retained in spite of a significant growth in the population over the last 40 years and this is reflected and celebrated in the large number of thriving clubs.



There have been many meetings with some 800 or so residents, who have made a considerable contribution to the Plan. Emerging from these meetings residents have commented on the strengths and issues of concern about living in Sonning Common. These have been summarised and appear in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Strengths and issues identified by residents¹⁸

Strengths	Issues
Residents like living in Sonning Common	Age balance/longevity
Community spirit	Lifestyle changes
Distinctive character of village	Balance of housing stock/cost of homes
Local employment	Identikit new houses
Variety of retail	Road parking/bus manoeuvring in Wood Lane
Schools/library/health services	Retain rural feel with growth/low level lighting
Rural 'look and feel' to village	Traffic calming measures
Access to open country side	Road/path maintenance
Active parish council	Low level of recreation facilities
Woodland character	Lack of community space
Thriving clubs and activities	3 rd Thames Bridge

¹⁸ Source: www.scp-ndp.co.uk - Community evidence – collated by Place Studio – consultants, 28 April 2012

Aims, priorities and development choices

Aims and priorities

The SCNDP consultation with residents built on evidence already gathered in the Community Survey carried out in 2009/10. This survey was distributed to 1,800 homes and 78% were returned. Among the top priorities identified were:

- village centre environment to be remodelled
- parking improvements to be implemented
- housing developments to be shared between a number of sites and restricted in size

With regard to housing, 81% favoured small housing developments and two thirds of the respondents believed 40% of homes should be affordable, shared ownership. 82% believed the village centre needed to be remodelled.

Over recent years there have been comparatively few new houses built in Sonning Common and those that have been built have tended to be 4 and 5 bedroom dwellings. At the same time there has been a trend towards extending existing properties, with the same outcome: a shortage of smaller homes for young families and for older people to 'downsize,' exacerbated by significant increases in house prices.

The ORCC housing needs report ¹⁹ recorded the strong view of the residents that smaller and more affordable homes should make up the majority in new developments. This need for a focus on 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes in order to rebalance the housing stock was confirmed by the Census results of 2011, published in 2012.

The aim from the 2009/10 survey that new houses should be shared between several sites has been confirmed in the more recent consultations. Although 15 SHLAA sites were identified by SODC the availability/suitability has been reduced, either as a result of landowners withdrawing sites or following consultation with villagers and preliminary discussions with The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB).

This has resulted in a focus on a smaller number of sites which provide a balance between development in the north west and south of the village and a strong desire to retain the existing separation between the edge of Sonning Common and Reading town. Residents also expressed strong views against any development that might suggest a merger with Kidmore End. A strong view from SCNDP public consultations emerged that the "rural feel of the village" should be conserved and enhanced and any development should minimise the impact on the AONB and surrounding countryside.

Residents have consistently commented that parking and traffic issues need to be resolved to help the village centre to thrive. While many of these problems are caused by inconsiderate behaviour by motorists, especially parking on pavements, the village hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park in the village centre. Sonning Common is currently a service centre for the surrounding villages through provision of education, health and retail facilities. The proposed additional housing is likely to bring further parking pressures.

¹⁹ Source: ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

Sonning Common has no recreational facilities of its own for teenagers or adults, i.e. no playing fields/pitches or recreational grounds and no sports or sufficiently large community hall. SODC has identified these and other recreational deficiencies in three studies undertaken in 2008, 2011 and 2015.^{20 21 22} The introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in South Oxfordshire may go some way to providing assistance with funding for new facilities.

Development choices

The SCNDP Working Party has fully involved residents in the decision making process of site selection and this consultation generated the following guiding principles for the future use of land:

- protect the rural character of Sonning Common in relation to its surroundings
- designate further land for public amenity use to make good identified shortages
- distribute the housing on a number of sites
- enhance and sustain the retail centre and local employment
- support the schools and other essential facilities
- ease the traffic flow and car parking problems
- promote the use of the bus service, cycling and footpaths
- address shortfalls in the provision of recreational and sporting facilities

The site selection process concluded that allocations or designations should be made for the following SHLAA sites (Part Four for further detail):

- SON 1 Old Copse Field (Local Green Space designation)
- SON 2/3 Bishopswood Middle Field/Memorial Hall Field
- SON 5 Kennylands Paddock
- SON 6 Kennylands Road Infill
- SON 7/7a Hagpits House/Hagpits Orchard
- SON 8 Kennylands Gymnastics (subject to a covenant from 1983 specifying recreation use)
- SON 9 Lea Meadow
- SON 15a Chiltern Edge Top Field

²⁰ Source: SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment April 2008

²¹ Source: SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy March 2011

²² Source: Sonning Common: Local Needs Report, June 2015 by Nortoft