

## Policy and Programmes

HEAD OF SERVICE: HARRY BARRINGTON-MOUNTFORD



Listening Learning Leading

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### **Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan Review – Modification Statement**

Under Regulation 17(e)(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the local authority must submit to the examiner a statement setting out whether or not the authority consider that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the authority is of this opinion.

The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was made as part of the district council's development plan on 13 October 2016. Since the adoption of the Sonning Common NDP, the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 was adopted in December 2020. Since the Sonning Common NDP was made the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has also been updated, with the latest revision dated 20 July 2021.

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 set out a housing requirement for the Large Village of Sonning Common. Policy H4 states:

*'1. A housing requirement of 257 homes will be collectively delivered through Neighbourhood Development Plans and Local Plan site allocations at the Larger Villages as follows:*

- 46 homes at Nettlebed*
- 96 homes at Sonning Common*
- 115 homes at Woodcote*

*2. If a Neighbourhood Development Plan has not adequately progressed with allocating sites\* to meet these requirements within 12 months of adoption of this Local Plan, planning applications for*

*housing in that Larger Village will be supported provided proposals comply with the remainder of the policies in this Development Plan.  
\*the Plan has reached submission stage and has allocated sufficient housing sites.'*

The Sonning Common NDP Review is seeking to respond to these local and national planning policy changes. The following policy changes have been made:

- Policy RSB1 – proposed new settlement boundary policy.
- Policy RSB2 – Proposed new policy to guide development.
- Policy RH1 – Proposed new allocation policy.
- Policy RH2 – Amended housing mix policy.
- Policy RH3 – Amended infill policy.
- Policy RH4 – Proposed new boundary policy.
- Policy RH5 – Proposed new First Homes policy.
- Policy RD1 – Amended design policy.
- Policy RD2 – Same as Policy D1a in made Plan.
- Policy RD3 – Proposed new village character village.
- Policy RD4 – Proposed new design policy.
- Policy RVC1 – Amended village centre policy.
- Policy RVC2 – New village centre policy.
- Policy RVC3 – New electric vehicle parking policy.
- Policy RE1a – Proposed new employment sites policy.
- Policy RE1b – Amended Kirby's Yard policy.
- Policy RCSH1 – Amended Policy CSH1a from made Plan.
- Policy RCH2 – Amended Policy CSH1 from made Plan.
- Policy RCSH3 – New Memorial Park policy.
- Policy RTP1 – Proposed new parking policy.
- Policy RTP2 – Same as Policy MRP1a in made Plan.
- Policy RTP3 – Proposed new transport policy.
- Policy RENV1 – Amended green infrastructure policy.
- Policy RENV2 – Amended AONB policy.
- Policy RENV3 – Amended green environment policy.
- Policy RENV4 – Amendment of Policy ENV2b from made Plan.
- Policy RENV5 – Proposed new climate change policy.
- Policy RDE1 – Proposed new pre-application policy.

Whilst a number of new policies and policy modifications are being proposed, the most significant modifications relate to the introduction of a settlement boundary around the built-up area of Sonning Common, the amended allocation of site SON 15 to increase the number of units to be delivered by 13, the reserve allocation of SON 23, and the introduction and expansion of policies covering biodiversity and climate change.

The Planning Practice Guidance sets out the types of modifications which can be made to the neighbourhood plan. These are:

- *Minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum.*

- *Material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.*
- *Material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.*

The council consider the proposed modifications materially affect the policies in the plan. The vision of the plan has been updated, but it remains largely unchanged in its nature. The submitted review of the Plan is responding to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, whereas the 'made' Plan responds to the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy. Despite this change in the development plan, the modifications which are proposed in the Sonning Common Plan are not significant. In responding to the housing requirement in the Local Plan 2035, the review plan proposes to increase the housing number on an existing allocation by 13 dwellings and introduce a new reserve allocation on SON 23. Even in the event of the Little Sparrow site being allocated as recommended by the council, the site already benefits from planning permission and would not result in the allocation of a new site for development. In this context the council does not consider that these modifications amount to allocating significant new sites for development.

Therefore, although material, the proposed modifications are not considered to be so significant or so substantial as to change the nature of the plan. In the council's opinion, the plan should undergo an independent examination but it should not require a new referendum.