



East Hagbourne

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN -
2018 to 2033

Submission Version 17 September 2018

Appendix 8: Methodology and Conclusions for Site Allocation

East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan

APPENDIX 8 Evaluation of sites for housing and selection of site(s) for allocation. An explanation of the methodology and conclusions.

The background - Why allocate sites for housing?

Demand for housing

In the EHNP Community Survey (NPCS, Appendix 6) carried out in the summer of 2016, 93% of households responding said that their current home met their needs, but 10% said that they would need another home in the next five years. Reasons given were to downsize, start a first home, or to be near family. Half of these said that affordability was a barrier to moving and 4.4% (9 of 204 households) said that there was a lack of suitable housing in East Hagbourne. When asked how many bedrooms they would need 5.9% (12 of 204 respondents) asked for 2 bedrooms. There is therefore a small demand for more small homes in East Hagbourne. When asked if they would support additional house building over a nominal total of 25 through infill, only 7% of respondents were supportive of building more than 25 additional homes. Half wanted no additional homes built and there was a strong preference for infill development over larger building sites.

In the wider South Oxfordshire District the government has set targets for many thousands of houses to be built. The SODC Local Plan 2011 focussed strongly on Didcot as a growth town, however the emerging Local Plan 2033 seeks to spread development more widely across the District. In both plans, East Hagbourne is classed as a 'smaller village'. While the 2011 Plan calls for only infill development, the emerging 2033 Plan envisages that in smaller villages, a minimum of 500 new homes will be delivered. Smaller villages are likely to deliver 5%-10% growth over the plan period to 2033. For our village of 500 dwellings, 10% growth would represent 50 houses over the plan period. The provision of such growth is in line with the expression of housing need identified in the Parish Survey. Since the baseline starting date of May 2011, 5 infill dwellings have already been delivered or currently being built within the Parish and a further 6 have planning permission.

Current situation

The current SODC Local Plan 2011 has allocated land to the west and north of Didcot for major building projects, but the plan is out of date because the District does not have a 5-year land supply. The new 2033 Local Plan is expected to be approved later in 2018 and presents a strategy to spread housing more evenly around the District, but the eventual land supply situation is uncertain.

This has led to a large number of development proposals for unallocated land within East Hagbourne Parish. Several of these are distant from the village community itself and if approved would form part of Didcot rather than East Hagbourne, but would impair the open and rural nature of the parish that is appreciated by village and town alike. Closer to the village, a proposal to build 170 houses in the 'Green Gap' between Didcot and East Hagbourne was dismissed at appeal in January 2017.

However, outline planning permission has already been granted for a development of up to 74 houses on the western fringe of the village on land adjacent to Hagbourne Village Hall and identified as Site 5 in our assessment and an application for 78 houses has been submitted for a site at the eastern end of the village, Site 2 in our assessment. Together these developments would increase the number of dwellings in the village community by 30%, far exceeding the expectations of the Local Plan.

Villages including East Hagbourne have been encouraged to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, to be aligned with Local Plans, however where the housing policies of the Local Plan are out of date, the NP would also be considered ineffective. The Ministerial statement of Dec 2016 attempts to address this situation by providing some protection to NPs that allocate land for building, even when the Local Plan is out of date. A made neighbourhood plan which allocates sites for housing is considered up to date if the LPA has a 3 year supply of housing land, as opposed to a 5 year supply for area without a made NP.

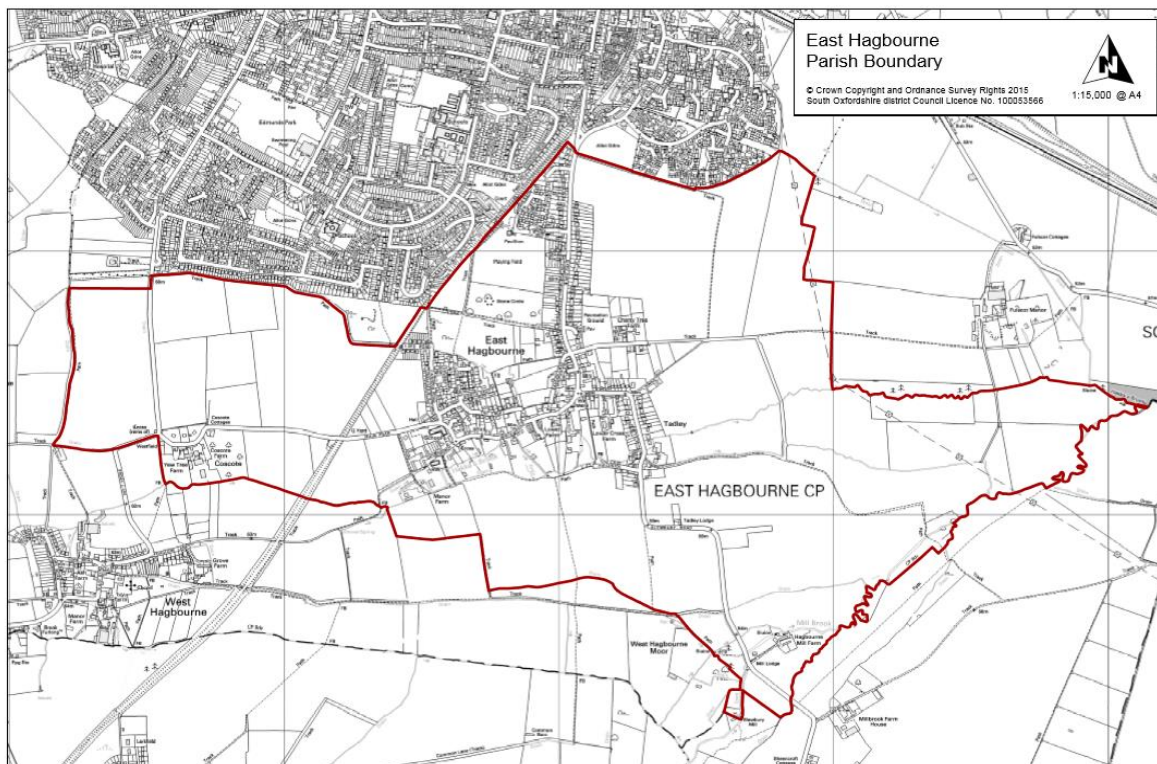


Figure 1. The boundary of East Hagbourne Parish, post 2015

Principles and timetable for the site assessment and allocation process

In approaching the question of site assessment for potential allocation, we took the position that all land in the NP area should be included in an initial pre-screening exercise.

To achieve the objective that the process should be carried out in an objective, open and transparent way, we have

- Made regular postings of progress on our NP website <http://easthagbourneplan.net/> with, including draft site assessments and minutes of meetings.
- Consulted with the whole community through the web site, regular updates in the Parish Magazine and public meetings.
- Engaged a 'Community Group' of 14 people to work with the Steering Group through the site assessment and evaluation process.

The decision to carry out site assessment for potential allocation was made following discussions with SODC on 23rd August 2017 and the decision explained at a public meeting on 14th September 2017. A total of 53 land parcels was identified over the whole of the parish and these were all included in the pre-screening exercise, with a first draft being completed by 30th October. This identified six sites for detailed assessment as possible allocation sites. Detailed assessments were completed on these sites and letters sent to all affected land owners on 11th December 2017 inviting their comments with a comment period of 6 weeks, following which some changes were made to the assessments based on the information received.

The Site Assessment process was designed to be factual, with interpretation of the information reserved to the Evaluation stage. A first draft of the site evaluation was completed on 29th December 2017 and refined in discussion with the Community Group in meetings on 24th and 31st January 2018. The conclusion was that two sites, Site 2 and Site 5 were "potentially suitable for allocation", with a preference emerging for Site 5.

Three scenarios were submitted to AECOM to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which was delivered on 19th February 2018. AECOM compared two allocation strategy options, i.e. Site 5 only; and Site 5 plus Site 2 and highlighted pros and cons associated with each option. The

broad conclusion was that allocation of both sites would lead to a range of concerns over-and-above allocation of Site 5 only, most notably in respect of landscape and loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.

Leadership

The Locality Toolkit "Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans" says that a working group should be set up to carry out the site assessment process. This would ideally be a core group who are involved in the assessment of each site, to ensure consistency.

Our Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group forms the core group that performs most of the background work and provides overall leadership. The SG has been streamlined to 6 people, all of whom play an active role.

To provide a broader base of community representation, we have also appointed a Community Group of 14 people. The combined 20 people of the SG and CG are responsible for reviewing and approving all the site assessments and eventually the site evaluations and allocation recommendations.

We have carried out the site assessment process in consultation with SODC and with expert support from Locality (AECOM) and Community First Oxfordshire. In particular, AECOM are reviewing our process and assessments at each stage and offering comments and advice. AECOM are also providing support in the form of a Housing Needs Assessment and a Strategic Environmental Analysis.

The SG is constituted as an Advisory Committee to East Hagbourne Parish Council and has written terms of reference and code of conduct and these standards have also been applied to the Community Group. All members of both groups have prepared Declaration of Interest statements which are publically available on the web site.

The target housing numbers

Our NP covers the whole of the civil parish of East Hagbourne. It is important to note that the parish boundary was changed in May 2015, following a Community Governance Review carried out by SODC in 2013. The boundary change removed around 285 houses that were formerly in East Hagbourne parish into Didcot parish. The implication of this is that the 2011 Census figures need to be interpreted with great care, excluding that portion now in Didcot from any analysis. The number of dwellings within the current parish boundary (the NP area) is around 500.

Since the baseline starting date of May 2011, 5 infill dwellings have already been delivered or currently being built within the Parish and a further 6 have planning permission. The provision of such growth is in line with the expression of housing need identified in the Parish Survey (NPCS), Appendix 6, where residents expressed a desire for small infill developments and were not in favour of larger developments. It is also consistent with the Local Plan expectation of 5-10% growth over the Plan period.

However, outline planning permission (P17/S2468/O, Decision Notice 26 January 2018) has been granted for up to 74 dwellings on land adjoining Hagbourne Village Hall on Main Road and identified as Site 5 in our site assessment process.

As a guideline figure for the site assessment and evaluation process, we have worked on the basis of providing around 75 new homes, a figure that exceeds the SODC minimum expectation.

The criteria for site assessment and evaluation

The Locality Toolkit sets out a number of national criteria for site assessment and these have all been incorporated into our assessment. However, the NPPF also makes provision for local criteria to be

used, provided that these are objective. In discussion with Ricardo Rios of SODC¹, the following local criteria have been adopted:

- Likelihood of the new development forming part of the East Hagbourne community
- Does it deliver appropriate housing numbers (in principle the numbers could be provided by more than one site)
- Is it sustainable e.g. impacts on traffic and existing community facilities
- How does it impact on identified village needs
- Is it consistent with the Didcot Garden Town plans

Ricardo was also supportive of our intention to carry out an initial screening (which would rule out the more remote sites) and then do an in depth assessment on those sites with a potential for allocation.

The importance of these local criteria can be seen from the map of current planning applications in and around our village. A number of substantial developments have been proposed which would effectively be extensions to the town of Didcot, even though they lie within the EH Parish boundary. These developments, if they are approved, will not contribute to the community of East Hagbourne and we do not consider these more remote sites suitable for allocation within our Neighbourhood Plan.

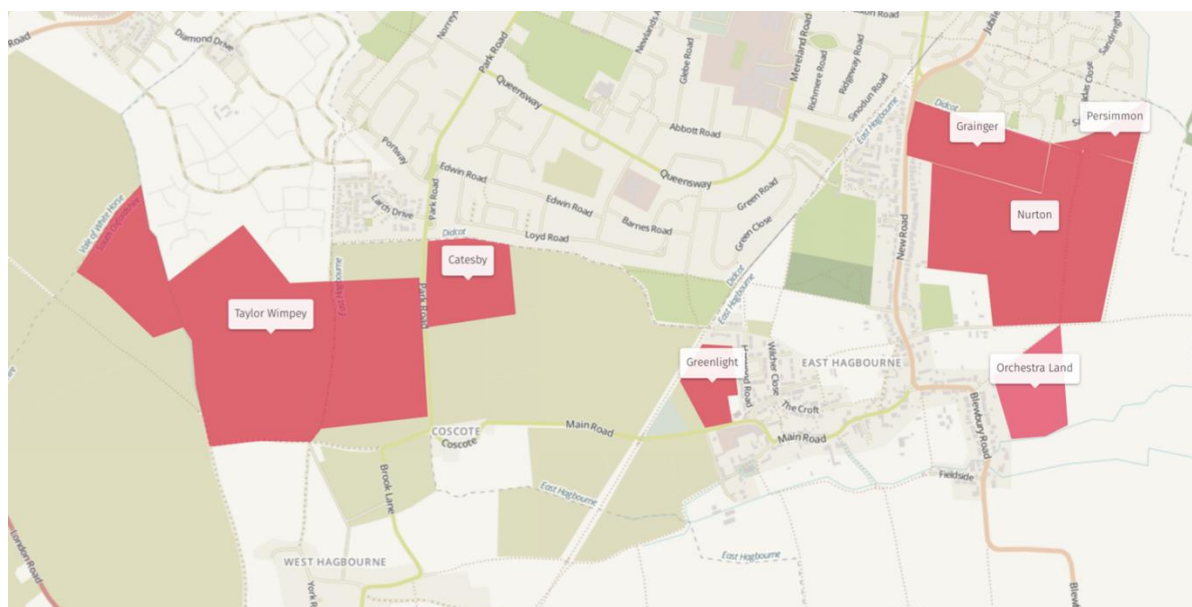


Figure 2. Map of large-scale housing proposals on unallocated sites in East Hagbourne Parish

Sites considered

The land within East Hagbourne Parish was divided into 10 landscape areas and then further subdivided to give a total of 53 land parcels for evaluation. This comprehensive coverage means that all SODC's SHELAA sites are included as are those offered under a call for sites.

¹ Meeting with SODC on 23 August 2017

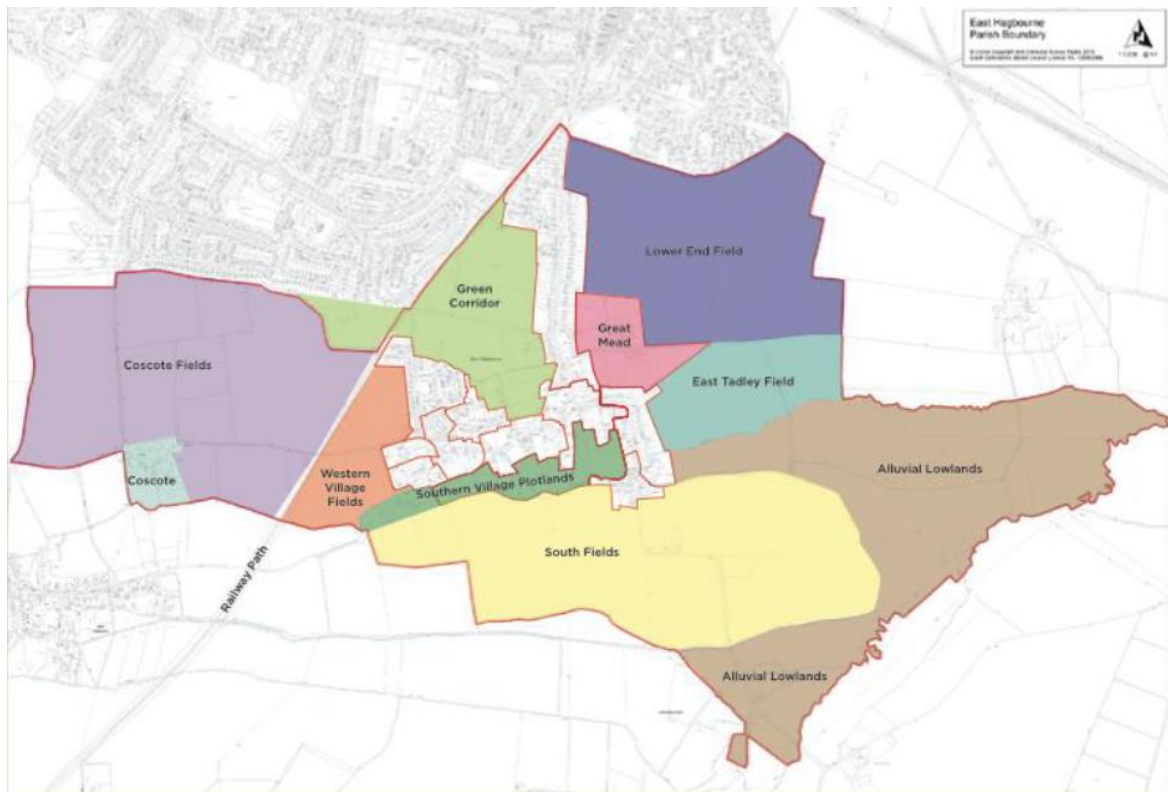


Figure 3. Landscape areas in east Hagbourne Parish

Pre-Screening

A pre-screening was carried out on all 53 land parcels and has been reviewed by AECOM. This initial screening assumes that all sites are potentially available and achievable, so the criteria used relate to suitability.

The four criteria used for the pre-screening are:

- Is the site closely related to, and well integrated with the village?
- Is the site easily accessible to EH services and facilities by both roads & footpaths?
- Does the site flood or could it create flooding /environmental issues?
- Will development impact the Conservation Area or the setting of the AONB?

As a result of the pre-screening exercise, six sites were identified for more detailed assessment as potential allocation sites.

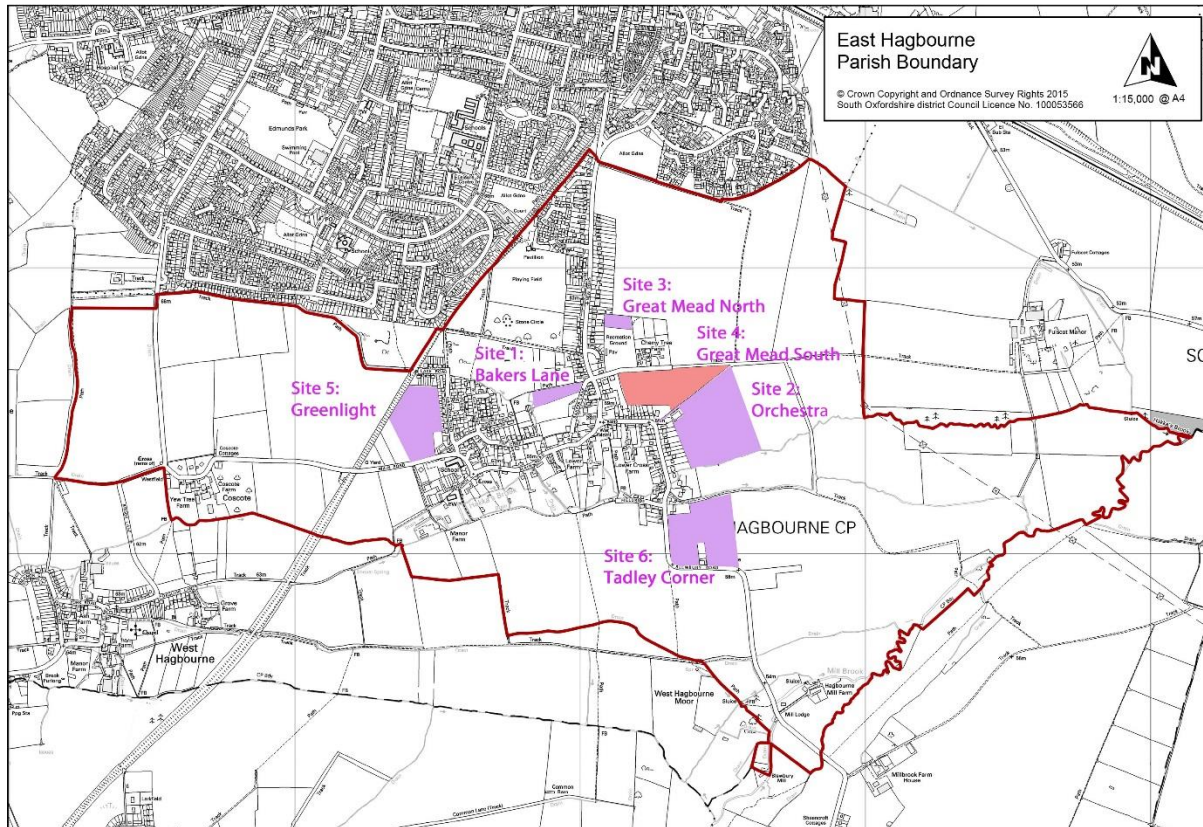


Figure 4. The six sites shortlisted for potential allocation

Site Assessment

The detailed assessment carried out on the 6 short-listed sites again assumed that all sites are available & Achievable. These aspects were addressed at the Evaluation stage.

The site assessment questionnaire consists of 36 questions covering all the national and local criteria and is intended to be objective and factual. The completed assessments have been reviewed by AECOM and were sent to the land owners allowing a six week period for them to submit comments.

The site assessments have been carried out based on the intrinsic characteristics of the site regardless of any planning proposal that may have been made. Where proposals exist, these are acknowledged through three supplementary questions summarising their nature.

The site assessments were finalised taking into account comments received from land owners and then formed the basis for the evaluation phase.

The Community Group met three times during November 2017 as part of the Pre-screening and Assessment process.

Site Evaluation

The site evaluation criteria are again based on a thorough review of the national and local criteria and the questions framed in the best way to address these. The questionnaire and responses have been reviewed by AECOM and changes made in response to their comments. The questions were consolidated to 11 questions on suitability, cross-referencing the question numbers in the assessment phase, plus questions on availability and achievability before coming to an overall conclusion.

The responses to the questions contain a factual part - a summary of the information from the site assessment, supplemented by an evaluation particularly aimed at identifying barriers to development of the site. Following this process, four sites were considered unsuitable for allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan, leaving two (sites 2 & 5) as potentially suitable, from which Site 5 was selected as explained below. This process was led by the Steering Group, but performed by all the members of

the Community Group working together, subject to any declarations of interest by individual members. As part of this process two meetings of the Community Group were held in January 2018.

Recommendations for site development

The Site Evaluation process identified two sites as "potentially suitable for allocation", i.e. they were judged to meet the requirements of Suitability, Availability and Achievability. These are:

- Site 2. East Tadley Field A (Orchestra) [planning application under consideration]
- Site 5. Western Village Plotlands (Greenlight) [outline planning permission has already been granted]

The Evaluation showed that:

(a) Both sites have issues for access and traffic safety. Site 5 exits onto Main Road close to the School and Village Hall, an area already congested at school/pre-school times. Site 2 is further away from these busy areas, but would exit onto a sharp bend in Blewbury Road where the safety of the access width and road junction arrangements are not fully verified.

(b) In terms of proximity to village facilities and hence integration with the community, Site 5 is close to the school, Village Hall and Pub, while Site 2 is closer to the village shop, PO and garage and Pavilion.

(c) Community facilities: Site 5 is in an area that is already congested at peak times, but has the potential to contribute to increased parking adjacent to the Village Hall. This area also has poor broadband facilities and some improvement in services may be needed. Site 2 is subject to a planning application that has offered a portion of land to the Parish Council for future community use and would open up access to Hacca's Brook.

(d) In terms of construction traffic, Site 5 offers the possibility to access the site via Coscote without passing through the main village and built environment, while Site 2 lies on the B4016 road from Didcot to Blewbury, passing through the midst of the built environment.

(e) Site 2 is on the edge of the village and would extend development into open countryside and impact views to and from the AONB. Site 5 is also at the edge of the village in a position that would impact on views into the conservation Area, but is less open to the AONB and would not extend the built line of the village further to the west.

(f) In terms of community facilities, Site 5 has offered a few more much needed car parking spaces and could perhaps supply more. Site 2 has offered community land and public access to Hacca's Brook.

(g) In terms of Achievability, Site 5 has outline planning permission, whereas Site 2 is still in the planning process.

Based on the evaluations of these two sites, the preferred option of the Community Group was Site 5.

Consultation and Final Recommendations

The Site Evaluation was submitted to AECOM who had earlier performed an SEA Scoping report and now carried out an evaluation for the three allocation scenarios:

- Allocate Site 2 alone
- Allocate Site 5 alone
- Allocate both sites

AECOM's broad conclusion is that allocation of both sites would lead to a range of concerns over-and-above allocation of Site 5 only, most notably in respect of landscape and loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, and that allocation of both sites is not supported, except in terms of 'housing' objectives (i.e. the NPPF objective to 'boost significantly the supply of housing').

The appraisal suggests that Site 5 (Western Plotlands A) is the preferable site on balance, in particular because of the 'significant' landscape concerns associated with Site 2 (Tadley Field A).

Other concerns associated with Site 2 that are particularly noteworthy relate to road safety and loss of best and most versatile (potentially best quality 'grade 1') agricultural land.

Concerns in respect of Site 5 relate to, amongst other things: 'heritage' (given impacts to views of the church, albeit detailed examination by the SODC Conservation Area has not highlighted any significant concerns); and wide-ranging 'community' considerations, given a risk of increased traffic congestion in the vicinity of the village school and hall, and a feeling that this land might be more appropriately used for community uses (including car parking to relieve existing pressure).

While access and road safety are not covered in detail in the SEA, AECOM's comments on the SEA aspects considered most critical are:

Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes

Neither site can be described as 'contained' within the landscape, reflecting the open nature of the farmland surrounding the village; however, they are associated with differing issues.

Western Plotlands A is a highly visible, prominent site, but benefits from a location on the side of the village away from the AONB. It is also the case that there is a natural boundary to the site, in the form of the dismantled railway line (now a walking/cycling route), such that there is limited risk of further 'sprawl', which in turn would give rise to a strong risk of coalescence with Didcot.

East Tadley Field A is mostly screened from viewpoints within the existing village envelope by existing housing, although the development would clearly be visible from its access junction with Blewbury Road (where as currently motorists glance towards farmland and agricultural buildings). However, the site would be very prominent in views south from two public rights of way (a footpath and a bridleway) that extend east from the village. Impacts on views to the AONB (Blewburton Hill) would be significant, and it could also be that the scheme is visible from one or more viewpoints within the AONB. It is recognised that there would be much potential to mitigate impacts through sympathetic layout, landscaping and design; however, significant concerns persist nonetheless.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to highlight the two options involving development of East Tadley Field A as performing poorly, and also to highlight the potential for in-combination negative effects to result from development of both sites (Option 3). It is appropriate to 'flag' the risk of significant negative effects, given the risk of impacts to the setting of the AONB.

Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.

The low resolution nationally available 'provisional' agricultural land quality dataset serves to highlight the likelihood of both sites comprising best and most versatile agricultural land. Whilst data has not been uploaded onto the magic.gov.uk website, it is also understood that detailed survey work has been completed as part of the Western Plotlands A site, and found that the site does indeed comprise best and most versatile agricultural land (specifically grade 3a). With regards to East Tadley Field A, detailed survey work has not been completed (as far as we are aware); however, it is noted that detailed data is available for the field adjacent to the north, finding the field to comprise best and most versatile land of the highest quality, namely 'grade 1' quality.

In conclusion, either site would result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, and hence significant negative effects are predicted. It is also appropriate to highlight the possibility of East Tadley Field A comprising grade 1 quality land.

Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.

There is little to choose between the two site options, with both being of a similar scale, and both equally able to deliver an appropriate housing mix. Allocation of both sites is the preferable option, recognising the housing needs that existing District-wide; however, all options would lead to significant positive effects, recognising that the housing target assigned to the village by the South

Oxfordshire Local Plan (as understood from the proposed submission version of the plan, 2017) would be significantly exceeded.

Summary of Site characteristics:

Site 2:

Traffic and access issues for this site are exacerbated by the site exiting onto a sharp bend. The site is further from the historic centre than site 5, but in walking distance of village facilities. Development here would potentially offer an area of community land and access to Hacca's Brook. Construction traffic would need to enter the site via New Road/Blewbury Road, both of which are highly populated. Development here would extend the built line into open countryside to the east and impact views to and from the AONB. Achievability is less certain than for site 5, since planning permission has not been granted and there are significant issues still to be resolved. Development here, having regard to the already agreed planning permission for site 5 would increase the number of houses in the village by more than 30%, vastly exceeding the expectations of the emerging Local Plan. In many ways, sites 2 and 5 are well balanced, however having regard to the intrusion into open countryside and impact on views for site 2, its access onto a sharp bend and the impact on total housing numbers given the existing planning approval for Site 5, this is not our preferred site for allocation.

Site 5:

The site exits into a busy part of the village, next to the Village Hall and School, but on a straight section of road. The site is at the edge of the village, but close to the historic centre and within walking distance of other facilities. Development has the potential to offer improved village parking and broadband facilities. Construction traffic could enter the site via the less heavily populated area of Coscote, without passing through the main village. Development here, although encroaching into open farm land, would not extend the existing built line further to the west. The site can be considered probably feasible, having outline planning permission. The number of houses to be provided exceeds the minimum requirements expected from the village in the emerging Local Plan. In many ways, sites 2 and 5 are well balanced and we regret that planning for this site, which ideally could contribute to future community needs as well as housing, has been pre-empted by the granting of planning permission for high density housing. However, acknowledging the less prominent intrusion into open countryside than site 2, the site access onto a straight section of road that more easily lends itself to traffic engineering and the existing outline planning permission, we consider that Site 5 should be preferred for allocation, It has in addition the potential for some mitigation of existing village problems and would fulfil the housing expectations from the village of the emerging SODC Local Plan.

Conclusion

Based on the above evaluation, the Neighbourhood Plan proposal is to allocate Site 5, to help secure the delivery of up to 74 dwellings in line with the outline planning permission and in the expectation that the developer will respond to the identified needs for more parking spaces and provide a safe access layout to the development, recognising the sensitivity of the location adjacent to the school and Village Hall.
