

SONNING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

BASIC CONDITIONS STATEMENT

NOVEMBER 2025

Published by Sonning Parish Council under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

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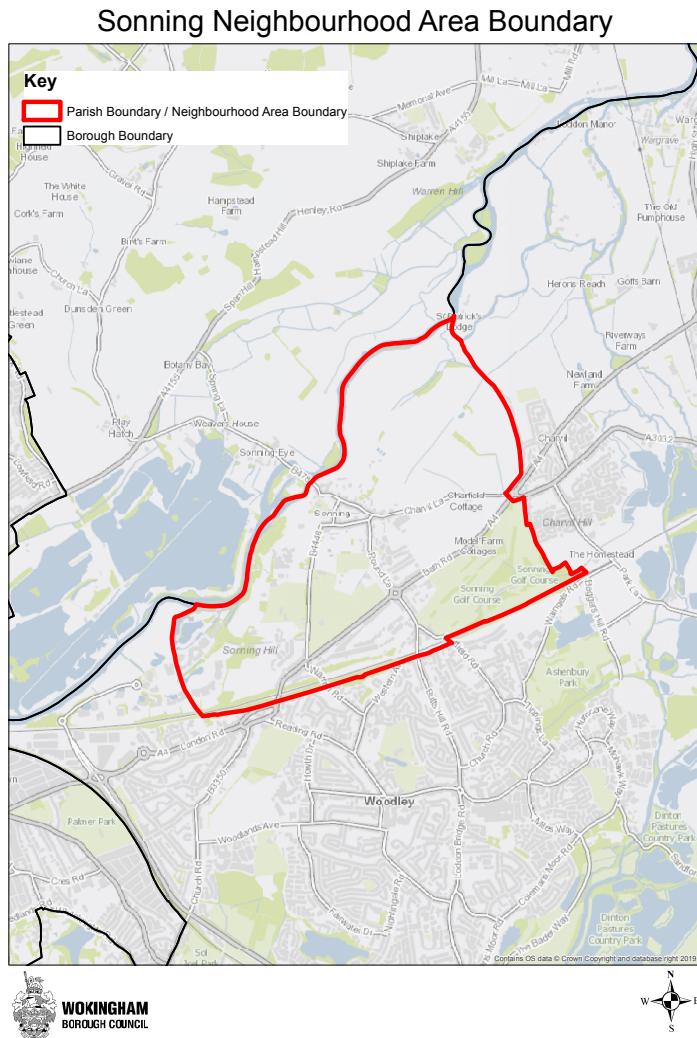
1. INTRODUCTION

The Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 This Statement has been prepared by ONH on behalf of Sonning Parish Council ("the Parish Council") to accompany its submission of the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan ("the Neighbourhood Plan") to the local planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council ("WBC"), under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ("the Regulations").

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Parish Council, the 'Qualifying Body', together with the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society and local residents for the Neighbourhood Area ("the NA"), which coincides with the boundary of the Parish of Sonning shown on Plan A below. WBC designated the NA in October 2019.

1.3 ONH has provided the professional planning advice and support to the Parish Council throughout the project, alongside occasional help from officers of WBC.



Plan A: Sonning Designated Neighbourhood Area

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan contains 7 land use policies, which are defined on the Policies Map where they apply to a specific part of the Area. The policies described in the Neighbourhood Plan relate to the development and use of land in the designated Area. They do not relate to 'excluded development', as defined by the Regulations. The plan period of the Neighbourhood Plan is to 2040, which corresponds with the plan period of the emerging Local Plan Update (eLPU).

1.5 The Plan has deliberately avoided containing policies that duplicate existing or forthcoming development plan policies or national policies that are already or will be used to determine planning applications. The policies are therefore a combination of site-specific allocations or other proposals and of development management matters that seek to refine and/or update existing policies.

The Basic Conditions

1.6 The statement addresses each of the four 'Basic Conditions', which are relevant to this plan, required of the Regulations and explains how the submitted Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act.

1.7 The Regulations state that a Neighbourhood Plan will be considered to have met the Conditions if:

- A. Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- D. The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- E. The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area); and
- F. The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations.

1.8 It is noted that the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 has made provision for Condition E to be amended by replacing the current requirement with a narrower condition in respect of not undermining the housing site allocation provisions in an adopted Local Plan. However, at the time of the expected examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, the regulations enabling that part of the Act have not been made.

2.BACKGROUND

2.1 The decision to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan was made by the Parish Council in October 2019. The key driver of this decision was a sense of wanting to ensure that future growth is integrated into the current much-loved fabric in a sympathetic way.

2.2 A steering group was formed comprising the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society, residents and Parish Council representatives. The group has been delegated authority by the Parish Council to make day-to-day decisions on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, as the qualifying body, the Parish Council approved the publication of the Pre-Submission plan in March 2025 and the Submission Plan now.

2.3 The Parish Council has consulted local communities extensively over the duration of the project. It has also worked with officers of WBC since the start of the project to collate and examine the evidence base, to design and iterate policy proposals and to define the proper relationship between the Neighbourhood Plan and the strategic policies of the relevant development plan(s). The nature and outcome of these various publicity and consultation exercises are set out in the separate Consultation Statement.

3. CONDITION (A): REGARD TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with full regard to national policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is mindful of the PPG in respect of formulating Neighbourhood Plans. As demonstrated in Table A, this plan has taken the opportunity to revise development plan policies to reflect the amendments to the Use Classes Order introduced in September 2020 as they apply to this Area (PPG 13-009c). In overall terms, there are four NPPF paragraphs that provide general guidance on neighbourhood planning, to which the Neighbourhood Plan has directly responded:

General Paragraphs

3.2 The Parish Council believes the Neighbourhood Plan “support(s) the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans … and … shape(s) and direct(s) development that is outside of these strategic policies” (§13). It considers the Neighbourhood Plan contains only non-strategic policy proposals or proposals that refine strategic policy to fit the circumstances of the Area without undermining the purpose and intent of those strategic policies (§18). It considers that the Neighbourhood Plan sets out more “detailed policies for specific areas” including “the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies” (§29).

3.3 The Parish Council considers that its Neighbourhood Plan has provided its communities the power to develop a shared vision for the Area that will shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, albeit in a modest way, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan contains no site allocation proposals nor any other policies that will result in less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area (§30). In this regard, the NPPF provisions of meeting local housing needs (as per §69/§70) are therefore not relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan is underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This is considered to be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned (§32).

Specific Paragraphs

3.4 Each policy engages one or more specific paragraphs of the NPPF. Those that are considered to be of the most relevance and substance are identified in Table A below.

Table A: Neighbourhood Plan & NPPF Conformity Summary

Policy No.	Policy Title	Commentary
HOU1	Delivering Genuinely Affordable Homes	The policy supports the delivery of a 100% affordable housing scheme on the Bull Close site and encourages the provision of Almshouses. This directly aligns with the NPPF's objective of addressing the "needs of groups with specific housing requirements" (§61). By identifying a specific need and mechanism (Almshouses), the policy reflects §63, which requires policies to assess and reflect the "size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups", and §64, which states policies should "specify the type of affordable housing required".
HOU2	Housing Mix	The policy is in conformity with the NPPF by setting out a specific housing mix to meet identified local needs. It requires new schemes to provide at least two-thirds smaller units (1-3 bedrooms) to address the needs of an aging population and allow for downsizing. This reflects NPPF §63, which requires policies to assess and reflect the "size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community," including "older people". The policy's guidance on a 50/50 split between affordable rent and ownership also aligns with §64, which allows planning policies to "specify the type of affordable housing required". The policy also aligns with §71, which encourages "mixed tenure sites".
DES1	Design Codes	'Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development' (§132). The policy seeks to bring 'clarity about design expectations' within Sonning (§133). The specific matters included in the policy 'provide a framework for creating distinctive places' to deliver a 'consistent and high-quality standard of design'.
ENV1	Local Gaps	This policy identifies Local Gaps to safeguard the gaps between Sonning and Charvil and Sonning and the Thames Valley Park. This is consistent with §29, which recognises the role of non-strategic policies in setting out more detailed approaches to conserving the natural environment. It also reflects §187, which requires planning to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. By preventing coalescence and protecting significant views, OV6 demonstrates regard to these provisions of the NPPF
ENV2	Local Green Spaces	The policy designates Local Green Spaces in accordance with §106-108, having demonstrated each space meets the criteria in §107. The policy resists all development proposals that will undermine the essential character of designated areas, unless there are very special circumstances as set out in

		§153, to justify why consent should be granted.
TRA1	Traffic Calming	This policy aligns with the NPPF by requiring development to address its transport impacts. It requires proposals to "enhance, road safety for all users" and "deliver or contribute towards measures to mitigate the impact on the highway network", such as traffic calming. This conforms with NPPF §109, which requires "addressing the potential impacts of development on transport networks" and "mitigating any adverse effects". The policy's requirement that mitigation "should avoid the introduction of urbanising features" also reflects §117c, which seeks places that "respond to local character and design standards"
TRA2	Active Travel	The policy requires that transport issues are considered from the earliest stages of development proposals so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued (§109).

4. CONDITION (D): CONTRIBUTING TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 As neither a Sustainability Appraisal nor Strategic Environmental Assessment Report have been required of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Statement sets out in Table B below how each of the policies contribute to the achievements of sustainable development. It does so by identifying the potential of each policy to lead to positive (green), neutral (yellow) or adverse (red) effects, taking into account the proposed mitigation measures.

Table B: Neighbourhood Plan & Sustainable Development					
Policy		Social	Economic	Environmental	Commentary
HOU1	Delivering Genuinely Affordable Homes				By encouraging a 100% affordable scheme at Bull Close and specifically Almshouses, the policy seeks to address acute local affordability needs and supports an inclusive, mixed community. Construction and local spend provide modest economic benefits, while environmental effects are controlled through other plan policies and normal development management, leading to a neutral overall environmental outcome.
HOU2	Housing Mix				Requiring a higher proportion of smaller homes (1–3 bedrooms) supports downsizing and improves access for a wider range of households, including older residents, thereby strengthening community cohesion. It should assist housing turnover and local labour retention (economic positive). Smaller dwellings typically have lower per-unit energy and land take, giving a marginal environmental benefit overall.
DES1	Design Codes				Using locally-specific design codes gives clarity and lifts design quality, with social benefits for health, safety and sense of place. The emphasis on responding to character and the Thameside setting helps conserve landscape and heritage qualities and can promote resource-efficient layouts and materials, yielding environmental gains. The economic effects are neutral.

ENV1	Local Gaps				Defining gaps between Sonning & Charvil and Sonning & Thames Valley Park sustains settlement identity and avoids perceived coalescence, which residents value (social positive). Although it may limit some scales of development, effects on the local economy are neutral overall. Protecting openness and key views strengthens landscape character and biodiversity resilience (environmental positive).
ENV2	Local Green Spaces				Designating King George V Field, The Wharf, and Ali's Pond/Sonning Field safeguards much-used spaces that support recreation, wellbeing and social interaction. The policy has neutral economic effects, while the protection of accessible greenspace, habitat and riparian areas delivers clear environmental benefits.
TRA1	Traffic Calming				Targeted mitigation at key locations improves road safety and reduces the negative effects of through-traffic on residents. Better network efficiency and reliability support local businesses and services (economic positive). Lower speeds and smoother flows reduce noise and emissions, providing an environmental gain.
TRA2	Active Travel				Protecting and enhancing the parish's walking and cycling network — with particular attention to access along the Thames — promotes everyday active travel and inclusivity (social positive). Improved connectivity can shift short trips from car to foot/cycle, supporting local centres (economic positive) and reducing emissions and congestion (environmental positive).

5. CONDITION (E): GENERAL CONFORMITY WITH THE STRATEGIC POLICIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to ensure its general conformity with the development plan for WBC, that is the Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery (2014) and the Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2023), which WBC considers to be of a strategic nature (as per Planning Practice Guidance (§41-076).

5.2 In accordance with Planning Practice Guidance (§ 41-009), although this Statement is not required to demonstrate general conformity with the policies of any emerging Development Plan Documents, i.e. the eLPU, it is noted that the eLPU examination is currently taking place. As the eLPU is anticipated to be adopted by WBC in 2026, it is in the interest of the SNP that its alignment with the eLPU is demonstrated in this Statement

5.3 The Core Strategy defines Sonning as a 'limited development location' in the settlement hierarchy of WBC and contains no strategic proposals in the vicinity of the Area.

5.4 The Neighbourhood Plan has sought to fit its policies with the vision and grain of the development plan in a complementary way.

5.5 An assessment of the general conformity of each policy, and its relationship with emerging policy where relevant, is contained in Table C below.

Table C: Neighbourhood Plan & Development Plan Conformity Summary

No.	Policy Title & Refs	Commentary
HOU1	Delivering Genuinely Affordable Homes	<p>The policy is in general conformity with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities). The policy's support for a 100% affordable housing scheme, potentially including Almshouses, directly contributes to creating a socially sustainable and inclusive community. It ensures that individuals from a range of socio-economic backgrounds have access to housing, thereby fostering diversity and helping to bridge socio-economic gaps in accordance with the strategic aim of Policy CP2.</p> <p>The policy is in general conformity with eLPU Policy H3 (Affordable housing) and Policy H4 (Exception sites). While eLPU Policy H3 sets a minimum target of 40% affordable housing for sites in this location, Policy SNP/HOU1's strong support for a 100% affordable housing scheme on the Bull Close site directly helps to achieve the eLPU's strategic objective of meeting identified housing needs. Furthermore, the policy's specific encouragement of Almshouses directly reflects the aims of eLPU Policy H4(4), which supports community-led housing proposals.</p>
HOU2	Housing Mix	<p>The policy accords with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities) and Policy CP5 (Housing Mix, Density and Affordability), as well as WBC MDD Policy TB05 (Residential Uses). The policy provides a specific housing mix for Sonning based on the evidence in the Housing Needs Assessment, notably requiring at least two-thirds smaller units (1-3 bedrooms). This directly reflects the strategic aims of providing a mix and balance of housing based on local need (including for an aging population) and contributing to the creation of mixed and balanced communities.</p> <p>The policy accords with eLPU Policy H1 (Housing mix, density and standards). eLPU Policy H1 requires that the housing mix "reflect and respond to the identified housing needs... as set out in the council's most up to date evidence". The Sonning Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) provides this local evidence, which Policy SNP/HOU2 translates into a specific parish-level policy. By requiring at least two-thirds smaller units (1-3 bedrooms) to meet the identified need for downsizing, it directly implements the strategic objectives of both eLPU Policy H1.</p>
DES1	Design Codes	The policy is in general conformity with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) and Policy

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		<p>CP3 (General Principles of Development), and WBC MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character). The policy ensures that new development respects and responds positively to the existing character, landscape, and high-quality design of the area, as detailed in the Sonning Design Guidelines and Codes Report. This aligns with the strategic principles of achieving sustainable, high-quality design and ensuring development is appropriate in scale, materials, and character.</p> <p>The policy is in general conformity with eLPU Policy DH1 (Place making and quality design) and eLPU Policy DH5 (The historic environment). The eLPU strategically requires that development "reinforces or creates a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness" (eLPU Policy DH1(a)). The Sonning Design Guidelines and Codes Report, which this SNP policy requires development to follow, provides the specific, detailed local framework to ensure this strategic aim is met. The policy's strong focus on the Conservation Area also directly implements the strategic objectives of eLPU Policy DH5.</p>
ENV1	Local Gaps	<p>The policy accords with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP3 (General Principles of Development) and WBC MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character). The policy defines two Local Gaps to protect the essential countryside character and prevent the visual and perceived coalescence of Sonning with Charvil and the Thames Valley Park. This directly supports the strategic aims of protecting and enhancing landscape character and maintaining the separate identity of settlements, as informed by the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment and evidenced by an independent Local Gap Study.</p> <p>The policy accords with the strategic objectives of the emerging Local Plan Update, particularly eLPU Policy SS1(f) (Sustainable development principles), which explicitly requires development to "Maintain the separate identity of settlements and places, avoiding physical or perceived coalescence". The two Local Gaps defined in the SNP policy provide the specific, local mechanism to implement this strategic principle in Sonning. The policy is also in conformity with eLPU Policy NE5 (Landscape and design) by protecting the character and of the landscape.</p>
ENV2	Local Green Spaces	<p>The policy is in general conformity with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CP7 (Biodiversity), as well as WBC MDD Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping). By designating three specific Local Green Spaces, the policy safeguards vital green infrastructure and areas of high recreational, historic, and biodiversity value from inappropriate development. This aligns directly with the strategic goals of maintaining a high-quality environment, protecting biodiversity, and retaining green infrastructure networks.</p> <p>The policy is in conformity with eLPU Policy HC3 (Local Green Space). The eLPU's strategic policy states that Local Green Spaces "shown on the Policies Map, or in made neighbourhood development plans, will be</p>

		protected from inappropriate development". Policy SNP/ENV2 designates specific sites (King George V Field, The Wharf, and Ali's Pond/Sonning Field) based on robust local evidence, thereby implementing the exact mechanism provided by eLPU Policy HC3 at the neighbourhood level.
TRA1	Traffic Calming	<p>The policy accords with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) and Policy CP10 (Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network). The policy requires that new development mitigates its impact on the highway network and enhances road safety for all users. It specifically addresses known traffic issues, such as those related to cross-Thames travel, supporting the strategic objectives of managing travel demand and improving the existing transport network to alleviate congestion.</p> <p>The policy aligns with eLPU Policy C2 (Mitigation of transport impacts and highways safety and design). The eLPU's strategic policy requires development to "fully assess the transport impacts... and provide for appropriate mitigation" (eLPU Policy C2(1)). Policy SNP/TRA1 implements this by requiring development to contribute towards measures, such as traffic calming, to mitigate highway network impacts and enhance road safety for all users. The requirement to avoid "urbanising features" is also consistent with the design-led approach of eLPU Policy DH1 (Place making and quality design).</p>
TRA2	Active Travel	<p>The policy is in general conformity with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand). By identifying and seeking to sustain and enhance the Active Travel Network, the policy promotes viable, safe, and healthy alternatives to private car use, such as walking and cycling. This directly supports the strategic aims of managing travel demand, reducing reliance on motor vehicles, and promoting sustainable transport solutions.</p> <p>The policy is in general conformity with eLPU Policy C1 (Active and sustainable transport and accessibility) and eLPU Policy C3 (Active travel). The eLPU prioritises active travel (eLPU Policy C1(2)), and eLPU Policy C3 provides the detailed mechanism, requiring proposals to "enhance existing routes" (eLPU Policy C3(2b)) and "Maintain and enhance walking and wheeling routes" (eLPU Policy C3(2d)). Policy SNP/TRA2, by identifying Sonning's specific Active Travel Network, provides the local detail to ensure these strategic objectives are implemented within the parish.</p>

6. CONDITION (F): COMPATABILITY WITH EU-DERIVED OBLIGATIONS

6.1 WBC provided a determination statement in January 2025 that has determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment, in accordance with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessments of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is not required, following consultation with statutory bodies as per those Regulations. A copy of the final screening opinion is published separately.

6.2 As set out in Section 4 the Parish Council has met its obligations in relation to the EU Directive 2001/42 in respect of assessing the potential for significant environmental effects of the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.3 The Parish Council has also met its obligations in relation to the habitats provisions of EU Directive 92/43/EEC (and the associated Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)). In this regard, the Parish Council provided WBC with all the necessary information it required for the purposes of determining whether an Appropriate Assessment was required or to carry out the Appropriate Assessment if one was required. WBC's Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment concludes that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the 2017 Regulations) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

6.4 The Parish Council has been mindful of the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights in process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and considers that it complies with the Human Rights Act. The Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to extensive engagement with those people local to the area who could be affected by its policies and their views have been taken into account in finalising the Plan.

6.5 In respect of Directive 2008/98/EC – the Waste Framework Directive – the Neighbourhood Plan does not include any policies in relation to the management of waste. On that basis, this Directive is not considered relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore could not be breached.

6.6 In respect of Directive 2008/50/EC – the Air Quality Directive – the Neighbourhood Plan includes some policies relevant to Air Quality. These policies are tested in accordance with national policy and guidance relevant to their content. The policies are not considered to breach the requirements of the Air Quality Directive as they comprise small-scale interventions and do not negate from the framework for measurement and improvement of air quality set in the Directive.

7. SUMMARY

7.1 In Section 3 it is considered that each of the policies have had full regard to national policy, with no incidence of two or more national policies being in tension, nor of the Parish Council having to strike a balance between them. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan, as a whole, meets Condition (a).

7.2 In Section 4 it is considered that each of the policies either contributes to the achievement of sustainable development or is neutral in its impact on one of more of the three sustainability themes. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan, as a whole, meets Condition (d).

7.3 In Section 5 it is considered that all of the policies are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted and emerging development plan, with no incidence of two or more strategic policies being in tension, nor of the Parish Council having to strike a balance between them. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan, as a whole, meets Condition (e).

7.4 In Section 6 it is considered the making of the Neighbourhood Plan accords with all EU-derived environmental and other obligations. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan, as a whole, meets Condition (f).