

## **Sonning Neighbourhood Development Plan**

### **Examiner's Clarification Note**

This Note sets out my initial comments on the submitted Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. For the avoidance of any doubt, matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

#### ***Initial Comments***

The Plan provides a clear and concise vision for the neighbourhood area.

The presentation of the Plan is excellent. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. In addition, the Plan makes good use of various high-quality maps and photographs.

#### ***Points for Clarification***

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area. I am now able to raise issues for clarification with the Parish Council.

The comments made on the points in this Note will be used to assist in the preparation of the examination report and in recommending any modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. I set out specific policy clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan:

##### ***Policy HOU1***

I looked carefully at the site concerned from Garde Road.

The ambitions of the policy are clear. Nevertheless, as submitted Part A is a statement rather than a policy and seeks to apportion weight to a material planning consideration. In addition, Parts B and C read as aspirations rather than as land use planning policies. It would be helpful if the Parish Council expanded on its approach towards the development of this site.

I note point 1 in the context of the policy. Have any further discussions taken place with the landowner?

Does the Parish Council have any comments on the proposed revisions to the policy proposed by the University of Reading?

##### ***Policy HOU2***

I note the relationship between the policy and the Housing Needs Assessment.

##### ***Policy DES1***

This is an important policy in the Plan. It is underpinned by the Design Guidelines and Code. In the round the approach taken is a first-class response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

##### ***Policy ENV1***

I looked at the proposed Local Gaps carefully during the visit.

The Borough Council's representation sets out a revision to the boundary of the proposed Sonning-Charvil Local Gap. It would be very helpful to have the Parish Council's observation on this proposition.

### *Policy ENV2*

I look at the proposed local green spaces carefully during the visit. I noted their different sizes and uses. In general terms this is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the assessment of Local Green Spaces (Appendix 1). The policy takes the matter-of-fact approach in 108 of the NPPF.

There is an opportunity for the Parish Council to respond to the representation from the Reading Bluecoat School later in this Note.

### *Policy TRA1*

I noted the pockets of traffic congestion during the visit. In general terms I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach towards traffic issues.

However, to what extent does the policy add any distinctive value beyond the content of existing national and local planning policies?

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Section 10 of the Plan takes a positive approach to these matters. Nevertheless, I am minded to recommend that it is expanded to advise that the Parish Council will consider the need or otherwise for a partial or full review of the Plan within six months of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan Update. Does the Parish Council have any observations on this proposition?

### **Representations**

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan? I would find it helpful if it commented on the representations from Reading Bluecoat School and the University of Reading.

Wokingham Borough Council suggests a series of refinements to the Plan. The Parish Council's comments on these suggestions would be helpful.

### **Protocol for responses**

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 8 May 2026. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

If certain responses are available before others, I would be happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled, please could it come to me directly from the Borough Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy concerned.

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Independent Examiner

Sonning Neighbourhood Development Plan

16 April 2026