

Cholsey Parish Council



Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan

# Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

May 2017

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# 1. Introduction

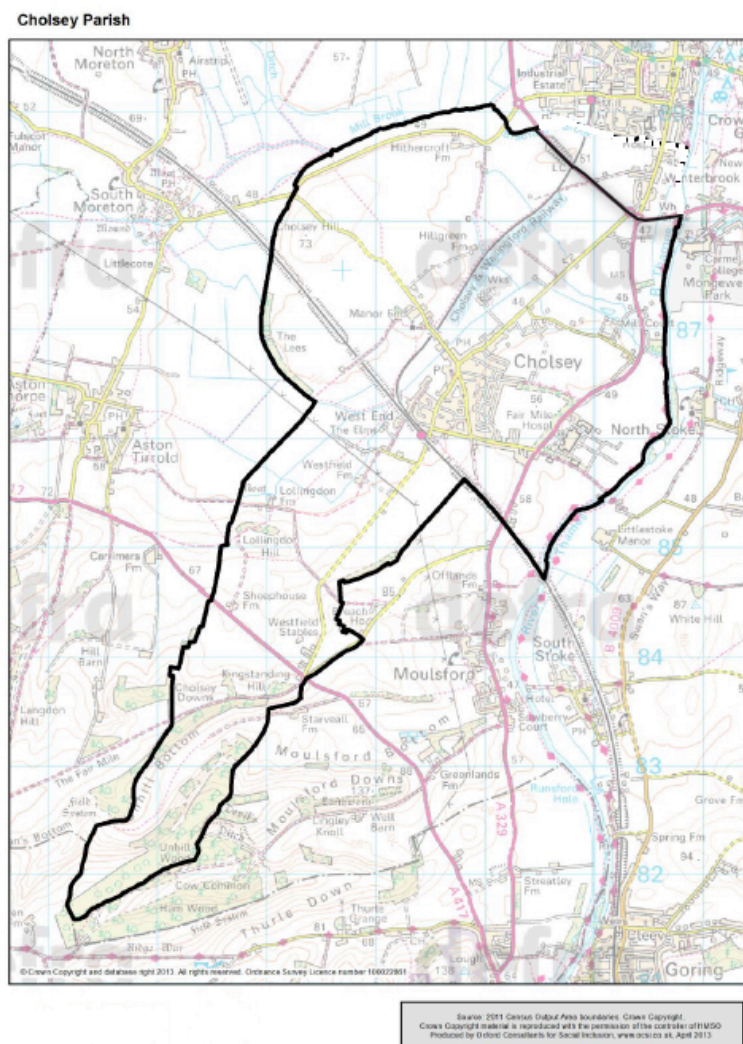
## Purpose

- 1.1. This document is the scoping report for a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating the requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Cholsey Neighbourhood Development Plan (CNDP).
- 1.2. Sustainability Appraisal ensures that the principles of sustainable development are included in plan making. The aim of this report is to demonstrate how the CNDP will contribute to achieving sustainable development. It is an opportunity for the Parish Council to consider how the emerging plan can help achieve a set of environmental, social and economic objectives, as well as how it may mitigate any adverse effects the plan might otherwise have.
- 1.3. A principal requirement is that the CNDP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire development plan for the area, this consists of:
  - **South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012)**
  - **Saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 (2006)**
  - **Made neighbourhood development plans**
- 1.4. South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is preparing a new Local Plan referred to as the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 (previously known as the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031), which is scheduled to be adopted in 2018.
- 1.5. We have taken account of the Scoping Reports and policies prepared by SODC for each of these documents to ensure that our plan is consistent with the reports and relevant legislation.
- 1.6. Strategic Environmental Assessment is a requirement of the EC Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'Directive') on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (Directive). This is included in UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which introduced environmental assessment as a requirement for many planning documents.
- 1.7. A Sustainability Appraisal differs from an SEA in that it is more comprehensive and identifies where the plan can contribute to improvements in economic and social conditions, as well as the environment. By undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal of our plan, we will fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- 1.8. In August 2016 SODC were requested to provide a screening opinion to assess whether the CNDP required a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Screening Opinion has not yet been received, and SODC indicate that it will be approximately a further month before they can provide this. In view of the information provided to other neighbourhood plan groups our view is that they are likely to indicate that an SEA is required. Continuing to wait for this

would delay our programme and we have decided to prepare an assessment anyway. Development of at least 300 new homes, the scale required by local strategic policy may give rise to a high probability that the housing allocations will have significant effects on the environment. This includes potential effects on both the nationally protected landscapes of the North Wessex Downs, the Chilterns AONBs and the nearby SSSI's.

## Local Context

- 1.9. Cholsey Parish Council is preparing the CNDP with advice from SODC and professional help from external consultants. A steering group of parish councillors and residents was established in March 2016.
- 1.10. Cholsey parish includes approximately 1810 homes and has an approximate population of 4380. The parish lies on the northern side of the North Wessex Downs AONB and adjoins the western side of the Chilterns AONB. The River Thames forms this boundary. The village is approximately 2 miles south of Wallingford, 14 miles from Reading and 17 miles from Oxford. The parish and its context are shown on Map 1.



**Map 1** Cholsey neighbourhood plan area and context

- 1.11. The neighbourhood plan area covers the whole parish. Map 1 shows the parish boundary and the local context.
- 1.12. SODC in its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identified 8 sites within, and adjacent to Cholsey, which had been identified by the council and/or put forward by landowners/land agents as potentially available for development. One of the sites is previously developed land. In preparing the plan one site has been extended and an additional site included.
- 1.13. The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy identifies 12 larger villages and makes a total allocation of homes to these villages of 1154 homes. It does not identify a specific allocation for Cholsey, but subsequent discussions with all the larger village parish councils concerning the proposed distribution of 1,154 homes, concluded with a figure of 128 for Cholsey.
- 1.14. The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) increased the housing requirement for South Oxfordshire. The emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 will identify further allocations for the larger villages to help meet the district's housing needs. It is expected that the allocation for Cholsey will be at least 300 new homes.
- 1.15. From the outset, community involvement with the preparation of Cholsey's neighbourhood plan has been undertaken and a community survey was delivered to every household. Details of this will be included in our Consultation Statement. The steering group have been kept informed of community views at each stage via written feedback. The community's views have provided valuable input to the collection of evidence and to the identification of the CNDP draft Sustainability Objectives.
- 1.16. The steering group believes it has a good understanding of the opinions and wishes of Cholsey residents, and the CNDP's vision and objectives for the plan have been shared with residents.

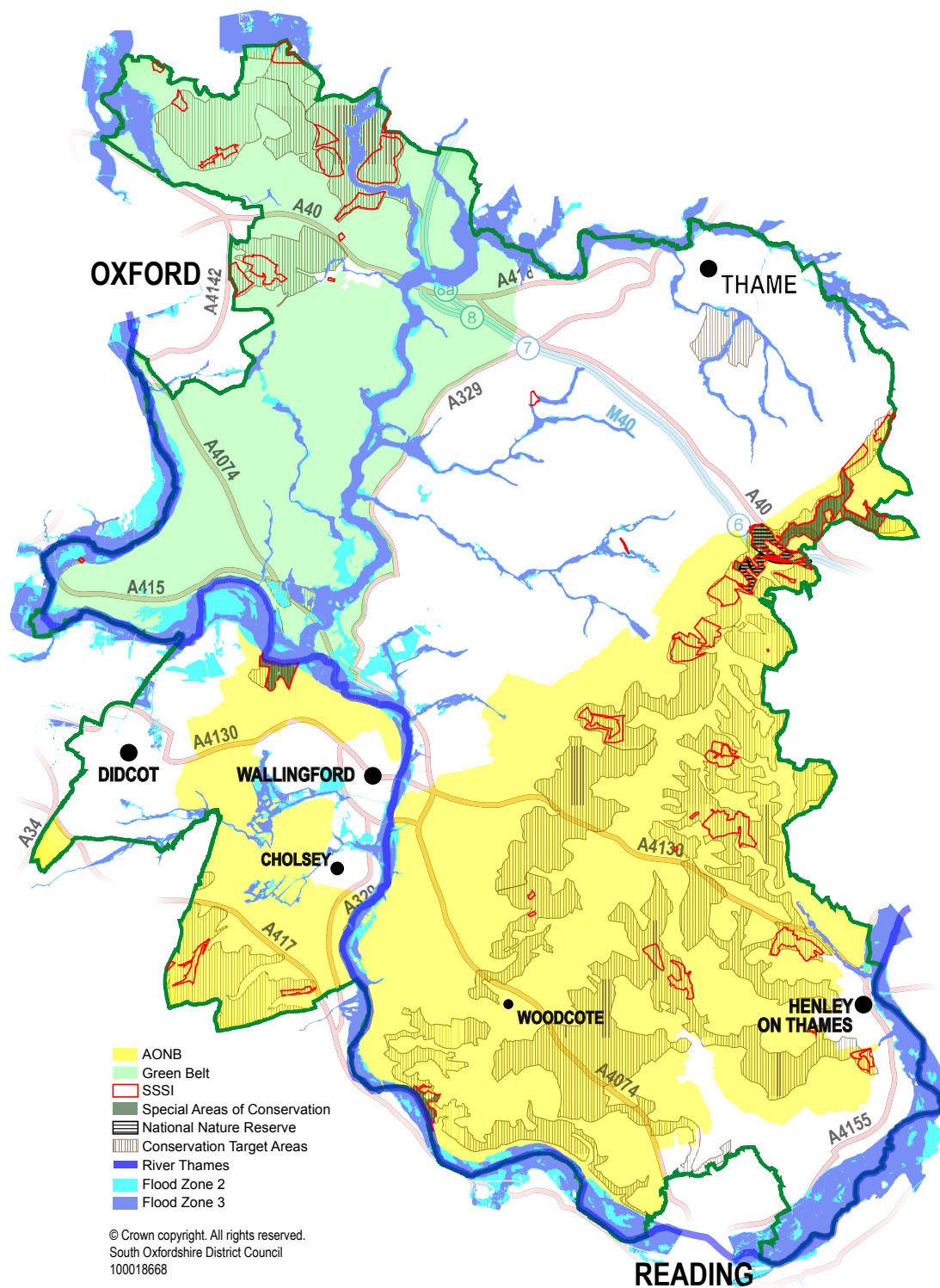
## 2. Legal Context and Process

- 2.1. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (based on the Europe 'SEA Directive') require any plans or programmes that have significant effects on the environment to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). While there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood development plan (NDP) to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) the CNDP Steering Group has chosen to do so as it will help ensure that the CNDP will contribute to achieving sustainable development. SA incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive and is more comprehensive. The Directive also requires the production of an Environmental Report that records the findings of the SEA undertaken. Throughout this document legal requirements of the SEA Directive **are highlighted in blue**.
- 2.2. National Planning Practice Guidance (the guidance) suggests a five stage (A-E) approach to SA that we will follow in the production of our SA. The relationship of these five SA stages to the stages of our plan preparation is shown in Figure 1 below. This scoping report will describe the findings of 'Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope' of the SA process and explain what happens next.

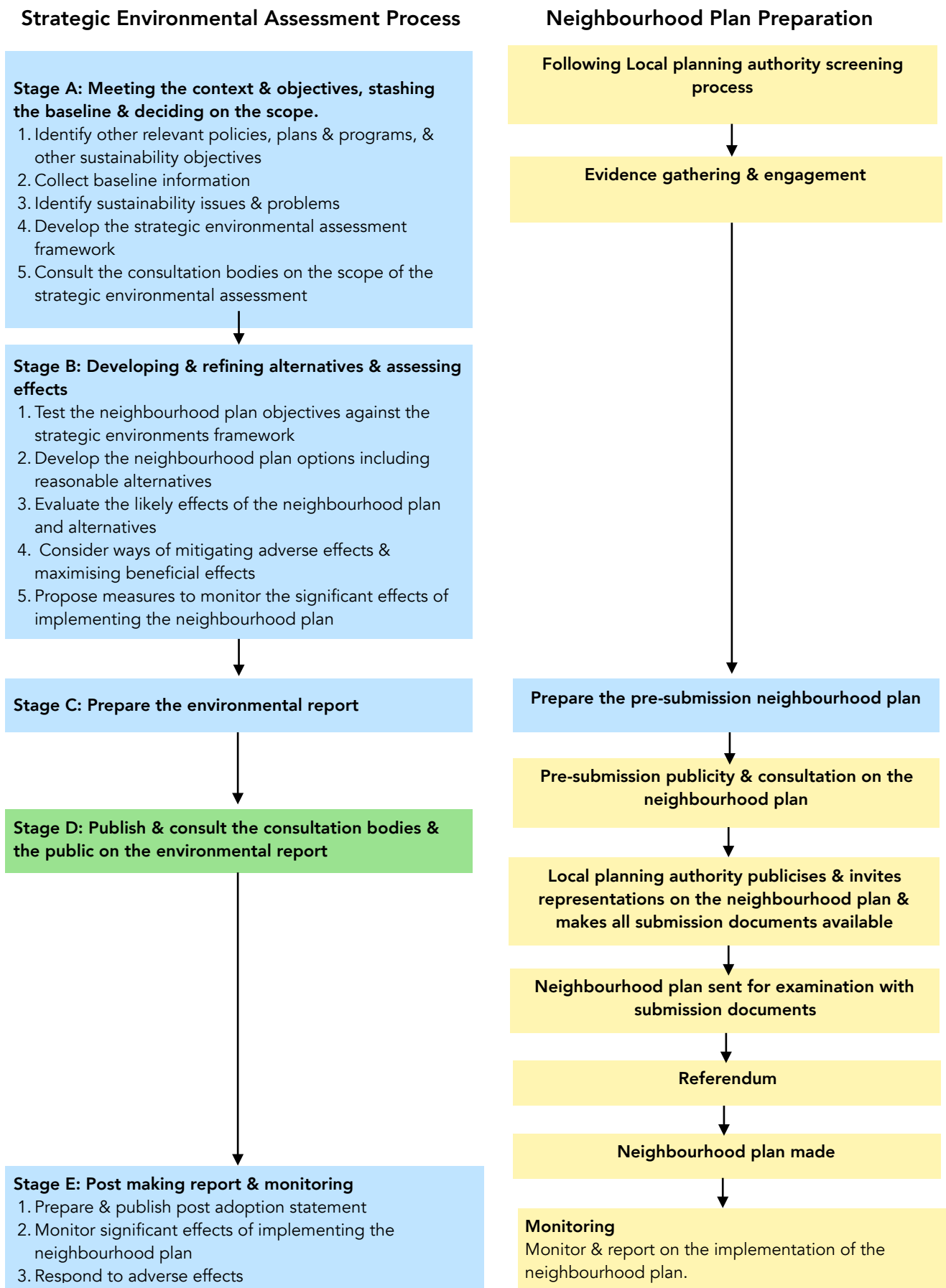
2.3. Whilst there may be potential environmental impacts on important habitat sites further afield, Little Wittenham SAC is the closest site and is approximately 5 miles away. SODC will be updating their local plan HRA and Appropriate Assessment to take into account the amount of housing allocated in the locality and to larger villages. This, therefore, does not need to be assessed as part of the neighbourhood planning process.

2.4. Map 2 shows the village in its local context and identifies environmental highlights and constraints in South Oxfordshire.

**MAP 2**



**Figure 1 Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Process**





### 3. Task A1 Relevant Plans and Programmes

- 3.1. SEA Directive requires that the Environmental Report should describe the “relationship with other relevant plans and programmes” and the “environmental protection objectives, established at International, Community or Member State level, which are relevant...” This is needed to establish how the plan or programme is affected by outside factors, to suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed and to help identify SEA objectives.
- 3.2. The guidance indicates that other plans or programmes may influence local plans as may their sustainability objectives. We should identify these objectives and note any targets or specific requirements. It is important to recognise that:
  - No list of plans, policies and programmes can be exhaustive and we have selected those considered to be of particular relevance
  - Plans, policies and programmes often exist in a hierarchy
  - The context is dynamic and new or revised plans, policies and programmes emerge regularly
- 3.3. In order to focus on the important areas in the environmental report, the guidance supports a narrow field of search specifically dealing with the potential significant impacts of proposed development within the neighbourhood plan.

Planning Practice Guidance indicates that:

“The strategic environmental assessment should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of the neighbourhood plan...It does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the content and level of detail in the neighbourhood plan.”

- 3.4. There is no need to repeat information included in a sustainability appraisal of a higher level plan or programme. As the CNDP must be in general conformity with national and local strategic policy, in our case the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan 2033 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Reports provide a comprehensive assessment of the policy context. To maintain a proportional approach, our view is that we should focus on the new content of SODC plans and use the information in the SODC Scoping Reports for other relevant information.

#### **Key messages from the review of plans, policies and programmes**

- 3.5. Table 1 below identifies key objectives that we will need to take into account in identifying our own objectives for the neighbourhood plan and the SA framework that will be used to assess the plan. The list is not necessarily exhaustive and there is no priority in the ordering of the list. Appendix 1 of the SODC Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report notes the possible plan response to the objectives derived from the plans, policies and programmes.

**Table 1 What the neighbourhood plan should seek to do:**

	<b>What the neighbourhood plan should seek to do</b>	<b>Derived from</b>
1	Where possible promote 'win-win-win' solutions that advance economic, social & environmental objectives together. In some instances trade-offs between competing objectives may be necessary.	NPPF UK sustainable development strategy
2	Conserve and enhance biodiversity not only on designated sites but also elsewhere, & consider the provision of new habitats when planning new developments.	Biodiversity 2020 SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
3	Reduce car dependency in households by facilitating home-working, more walking & cycling, and by improving public transport links and electronic communications when planning new developments.	OCC Local Transport Plan SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
4	Promote good design in new developments that are locally distinctive.	Local Plan 2011 NPPF
5	Prioritise the use of previously developed land & buildings.	NPPF SODC Sustainable Community
6	Avoid <b>low-density</b> development.	Core strategy
7	Adopt measures for the reduction, re-use, recycling & recovery of waste in new developments.	OCC Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Joint Municipal Waste Strategy
8	Adopt a sequential approach to the location of major generators of travel, with first preference being central locations.	NPPF OCC Local Transport Plan Planning for Town Centres
9	Ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities, meeting places, education & services areas are accessible by sustainable modes of travel: walking, cycling & public transport.	OCC Local Transport Plan SODC Core strategy NPPF
10	Ensure that local services, facilities & infrastructure are delivered when needed by local communities.	NPPF
11	Conserve and enhance the historic environment, buildings, monuments, sites, places, features and landscapes of historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural interest, both designated & undesignated.	NPPF English Heritage Strategy 2011-2015
12	Provide and protect access to sufficient high quality open spaces, sports & recreation facilities of all kind.	NPPF SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
13	Separate noise generating from noise sensitive land uses.	Noise Directive NPPF
14	Ensure new developments protect & enhance the water environment.	NPPF
15	Adopt more sustainable drainage systems where appropriate.	NPPF Flood and Water Management Act

16	Avoid placing people & property at risk in areas liable to flood.	NPPF Flood and Water Management Act
17	Regenerate areas of relative social deprivation.	NPPF
18	Protect the quality and character of the countryside & conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	NPPF Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plans
19	Develop renewable energy sources & incorporate renewable energy technologies in new developments, thereby helping to meet regional targets for renewable energy generation	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
20	Consider the impacts of potentially polluting development and where appropriate, apply the precautionary principle in assessing those impacts.	NPPF
21	Ensure that new housing developments are planned, monitored & managed so as to meet an objectively assessed need.	NPPF SODC Core Strategy
22	Seek to improve the match between housing needs (in terms of affordability & size of new homes) and the housing delivered in new developments.	SODC Housing Strategy
23	Support the development of Oxfordshire's economy & businesses, in particular by growing educational, scientific & technological industries & services, and small businesses.	Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal SODC Sustainable Community Strategy SODC Core Strategy
24	Support tourism-related developments based on the conservation & enjoyment of the district's inherent qualities and heritage.	SODC Corporate Plan Oxfordshire 2030 Community Strategy
25	Ensure that development in rural areas is of an appropriate scale & type to help to meet the social & economic needs of local communities to sustain the vitality and viability of town and village centres.	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
26	Ensure that development is designed with the needs of disabled people in mind.	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
27	Create developments that are safe & where crime, disorder & fear of crime are reduced.	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
28	Consider the implications of an ageing population.	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy
29	Protect areas which are safeguarded for minerals development.	OCC Minerals and Waste Local Plan
30	Promote & support economic growth around the Science Vale.	Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal SODC Sustainable Community
31	Improve facilities for electronic communication, including faster & more comprehensive broadband coverage, for both home-working & business to business communication.	SODC Sustainable Community Strategy SODC Corporate Plan 2012-2016

Source: SODC Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report – June 2014

## 4. Task A2 Establishing a Baseline

- 4.1. Having relevant data forms a starting point or baseline to measure the effects of the neighbourhood plan on sustainability objectives. This helps predict and monitor the effects of policies and programmes and in the identification of sustainability challenges.
- 4.2. South Oxfordshire District Council have collected baseline information for the Local Plan 2033 (Appendix 2 of their Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report– June 2014). The neighbourhood plan steering group is unlikely to be able to have access to any additional data sources and are of the opinion that the South Oxfordshire baseline data provides a comprehensive data set.
- 4.3. There are a number of issues that may affect the neighbourhood area regardless of the development we propose in our neighbourhood plan. These include;
  - A rising population and the subsequent demand for housing especially across South Oxfordshire
  - A high speed rail connection is being made between London and Birmingham (and later the north). This may lead to the increased attractiveness of South Oxfordshire for housing as workers commute to London
  - The electrification of the Great Western mainline will also decrease journey times to Bristol from Cholsey, thereby increasing its attraction for commuters
  - A new east-west rail connection between Oxford and Cambridge may lead to increased investment in Science Vale as the science parks' connections improve to other knowledge-based economies. This may have an impact on other public transport and an increased demand for supporting infrastructure and housing
  - The strategic economic plan for the county will contain proposals that the local plan will need to reflect

*Source: SODC Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report – June 2014*

- 4.4. Cholsey is in an economically successful area with a good environment and there is a high demand for housing. Map 1 shows the key environmental highlights and constraints in the area. The neighbourhood plan will seek to ensure that future development taking place in Cholsey meets sustainability objectives. Appendix 2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report shows that if uncontrolled development takes place, without a sustainable planning framework, environmental conditions risk deteriorating in the following ways:
  - Poor air quality in pollution hotspots caused mainly by traffic emissions could worsen
  - Water quality, which is presently good, could worsen
  - Stress on diminishing water resources could increase
  - Habitats and species of nature conservation importance could be threatened
  - Areas of valued countryside and attractive landscape could be harmed or destroyed
  - Natural resources could be used imprudently
  - A fine heritage of buildings and places of architectural or historic interest and importance, archaeological remains could be harmed or destroyed
  - Greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and transport could be marginally higher

- Development could take place where there is a dependency on the private motorcar, increasing the risk of environmental degradation and discouraging walking and cycling, with subsequent impacts on human health
- People and property could be located in locations at risk of flooding; and
- The amount of waste requiring disposal to land fill could be greater

### **Key messages arising from the baseline information**

- 4.5. The neighbourhood plan has an important role in the delivery of new housing. The extent to which this increased supply of new homes will reduce house prices, however, is uncertain given the high levels of demand in the sub-region. The neighbourhood plan will also have a role in the delivery of affordable housing which is in short supply. Map 1 shows that a large part of the parish is covered by or forms the setting for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that acts as a constraint to development.
- 4.6. The need to reduce the growth in road traffic and its consequent adverse effects on the environment, the economy and public health and safety can only be influenced indirectly, and to a limited extent by the neighbourhood plan. The same is true in relation to the need to reverse declines in wildlife habitats and species. In this case primary responsibility for action rests with other government or non-government organisations and partnerships of organisations working together with landowners.

## **5. Task A3 Sustainability Challenges**

- 5.1. Sustainability challenges facing Cholsey identified in this Scoping Report are derived from a combination of a review of relevant plans, policies and programmes and the relevant data. The sustainability challenges are set out in Table 2 below. This list is not exhaustive, but it includes those challenges where in future the neighbourhood plan may contribute towards their solution or amelioration.
- 5.2. The identification of sustainability challenges is required by the SEA Directive which states that an Environmental Report should include:

“any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC (the Birds Directive) and 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive)”

**Table 2.** South Oxfordshire’s sustainability challenges

	Topic	Sustainability Challenges
		<b><i>Environmental Challenges</i></b>
1	Landscape deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some areas of South Oxfordshire the condition of the landscape has deteriorated and is in need of repair, restoration or reconstruction (South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment: SODC, 2003)</li> <li>• Large-scale development on the edge of settlements including Cholsey is potentially inappropriate within the rural and unspoilt landscape of South Oxfordshire (South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003)</li> </ul>
2	Loss of biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges to Oxfordshire’s habitats and species that are leading to continuing biodiversity loss include increasing fragmentation of habitats, a changing climate, and the many demands on our land (biodiversity, food, energy, recreation and housing) (Oxfordshire’s Biodiversity Action Plan, ONCF, 201)</li> </ul>
3	Road traffic congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oxfordshire County Council’s 10 year traffic growth (2002 to 2012) showed an overall increase of 0.33% in the traffic on the county’s B-roads. Although this increase is very low, this may have been much higher without an economic recession. This may increase as the recession eases.</li> </ul>
4	Flood risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are approximately 21,000 properties at risk from river flooding in Oxfordshire, with around 8,500 at significant risk. Oxfordshire has 12% of its land within the floodplain (The Environment in Oxfordshire, The Environment Agency, 2009)</li> </ul>
5	Risk of drought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The South East is one of the driest areas of the country. Its average rainfall of 728 millimetres/year, compares to 906 millimetres/year in England and Wales (South East Region Drought Plan, The Environment Agency, January 2012</li> </ul>
6	Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change is a significant problem. greenhouse gas emissions at home, at work and when traveling, need to be reduced (Securing the Future: Delivering UK sustainable development strategy, DEFRA, 2005).</li> <li>• Little progress is being made in reducing CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. There is also slow progress in the development of diverse renewable energy resources (SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report Appendix 2).</li> <li>• Oxfordshire’s main areas of climate-related vulnerability are: increasing intense downpours and higher temperatures (Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, Briefing Paper 6: Environment 2007).</li> <li>• The South East is particularly vulnerable to climate change with low lying coastal areas and low average levels of rainfall. The South East has already recently experienced ten of the hottest summers on record and some of the heaviest rainfall events (State of the Environment - South East England, February 2010).</li> </ul>

7	Energy consumption and carbon emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic energy consumption and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions in South Oxfordshire are higher than the Oxfordshire average (Local authority carbon dioxide emissions, DECC, July 2013).</li> </ul>
8	Special Areas of Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of development locally and in the district (or elsewhere) could lead to an increase of vehicular traffic with a subsequent decrease in air quality around the SAC's in South Oxfordshire. Little Wittenham SAC is relatively close to Cholsey and near both the A4074 and the A4130 routes which are likely to be used frequently by Cholsey residents.</li> </ul>
		<b>Social challenges</b>
9	Shortage of affordable housing and the cost of general market housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing need in South Oxfordshire is very high. The objectively assessed need for the district is identified in the Oxfordshire SHMA at between 725 and 825 dwellings per annum.</li> </ul>
10	Lack of appropriate size of housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The main shortfall in both the affordable and general market housing sectors is for two bedroom accommodation (South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment, DCA, 2011).</li> </ul>
11	An ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South Oxfordshire's population is predicted to have a growing proportion of older people and fewer younger people (SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report Appendix 2).</li> </ul>
12	Social exclusion due to the remote location of some residential development and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a rural area such as South Oxfordshire access to services can be difficult for people who rely on public transport (South Oxfordshire's Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2026).</li> </ul>
13	Lack of indoor and outdoor community sports facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on identified future need, the indicative total capital investment required in the district is £22.9m. This includes the replacement of the Didcot Wave leisure facility (Leisure and Sports Facility Strategy, SODC, March 2011).</li> </ul>
14	Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite relatively low levels of crime, community safety has consistently been a priority for local people and anti-social behaviour remains a major concern (South and Vale Community Safety Partnership rolling annual plan 2012-2013).</li> </ul>
		<b>Economic challenges</b>
15	Pockets of deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South Oxfordshire is one of the least deprived local authorities in the UK, ranking 307 out of 354 authorities where rank 1 is the most deprived (Index of Deprivation 2010).</li> <li>The most deprived super output areas are at Berinsfield and Didcot. Low income levels are a significant component of deprivation in these areas (SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report Appendix 2)</li> </ul>
16	Ageing resident population structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ageing population will result in a fall in the size of the local workforce that will impact adversely on recruitment by businesses (SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report Appendix 2).</li> </ul>

17	Workforce skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills shortages are an obstacle to business success, however the number of residents with A-Level equivalent education is higher than the county and national averages (Appendix 2) (Our Place, Our Future, South Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2026).</li> </ul>
18	Road traffic congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are over 4,000 kilometres of road in Oxfordshire. The majority of these operate satisfactorily but there are a number of locations where the network is under stress. (Oxfordshire local transport plan 2011-2013).</li> </ul>
19	The availability and affordability of housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Oxfordshire's average house price is 14% above the Oxfordshire average, and 30% above the average for the South East. This has led to severe affordability problems (Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement 2005, and SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report Appendix 2).</li> <li>• There is a shortage of market and affordable housing (SODC Local Plan 2031 Scoping Report appendix 2)</li> </ul>
20	Investment in Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NPPF highlights the importance of infrastructure delivery. It is identified as part of the economic dimension to sustainable development. Paragraph 21 of the NPPF states that planning policies should seek to address barriers to investment including infrastructure.</li> </ul>
21	Threats to the vitality and viability of town and village centres	<p>The vitality and viability of town and village centres in South Oxfordshire is being challenged. The threats to these centres include changing patterns of consumer spending, travel, increasing competition from larger town centres and relocation of business to out-of-centre locations. The rise of internet shopping is also a threat to comparison retail units. (South Oxfordshire District Council Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment, 2010) (Our Place, Our Future, South Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2026).</p>
22	Shortages of suitable business premises in appropriate locations	<p>The majority of businesses in Cholsey and the surrounding area are small, the recession and the need for new homes has seen many small business premises converted to residential uses. South Oxfordshire District Council is committed to supporting business growth in appropriate locations (South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2012- 16.</p>

Original source: SODC Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report – June 2014 adapted for CNDP.



## 6. Task A4 Developing the Sustainability Appraisal Framework

- 6.1. The potential impacts of the neighbourhood plan must be assessed against predefined objectives for sustainable development. This provides a method for assessing the effects of the plan. The SA objectives are derived from the information emerging from tasks A1 to A3.
- 6.2. Table 3 below sets out 12 proposed sustainability objectives that we will use in the SA framework. It describes whether each objective addresses social, economic, or environmental matters or a combination of these. This scoping report has taken account of the objectives of the documents in the South Oxfordshire development plan as well as key issues raised by the local community and the neighbourhood plan steering group. It, therefore, inherently takes account of the plans, policies, and programmes contained within the SODC Local Plan 2031 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Appendix 1.

Table 3 Cholsey Neighbourhood Development Plan Draft Sustainability Objectives

SEA Objective		Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal...		Indicators to help inform the decision making criteria (this list is not exhaustive)	
1	Biodiversity and geodiversity: Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	Q1a	Will it conserve and enhance biodiversity?	Number and diversity of European Protected Species; s.41 NERC Act priority species and habitats in the area.	
		Q1b	Will it contribute to habitat creation and connectivity?		
		Q1c	Will it maintain and enhance sites designated for their biodiversity or geodiversity interest and increase their area?	Area and condition of BAP priority habitats Area and condition of sites designated for biological interest.	
2	Landscape and townscape: Conserve and enhance the landscape and, in particular, those areas designated for their landscape / townscape value. Ensure development is of a high quality design and reinforces local distinctiveness.	Q2a	Will it safeguard and enhance the character and setting of the AONBs?	South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment profiles	
		Q2b	Will it maintain and enhance visual amenity, including light and noise pollution?	Impact of development on areas within the Green Wedges	
		Q2c	Will it recognise local distinctiveness and identity?	Rate of encroachment into countryside	
		Q2d	Will it maintain, restore and enhance green infrastructure assets that contribute to amenity and landscape value.	Coalescence of settlements Impact of development on special landscape features	
3	Cultural heritage: Conserve and enhance the historic environment, and, in particular, those areas designated for their heritage importance.	Q3a	Will it preserve features of architectural, cultural or historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation and renewal?	Number and type of features and areas of historic designations in the area	
		Q3b	Will it preserve or enhance archaeological sites/remains?	Statutory and non-statutory sites in the Historic Environment Record (HER)	
		Q3c	Will it preserve or enhance the setting of cultural heritage assets?	Number and condition of archaeological features in the area	
4	Climate change adaptation: Plan for the anticipated levels of climate change.	Q4a	Will it increase the area and connectivity of Green Infrastructure?	Area and connectivity of GI	
		Q4b	Will it promote use of technologies and techniques to adapt to the impacts of climate change?	Implementation of adaptive techniques, such as SUDS and passive heating/cooling	
		Q4c	Will it minimise current flood risk and future increases in flood risk that are associated with climate change?	The risk of flooding (flood zones 2 and 3 are considered to be at high risk of flooding) Surface water runoff rates	
		Q5a	Will it encourage renewable energy generation or use of energy from renewable sources?	Proximity to public transport links Frequency of nearby public transport services	
5	Climate change mitigation: Reduce contributions to climate change through a) sustainable building practices and b) maximising potential for renewable energy and c) energy conservation and minimising use of fossil fuels.	Q5b	Will it help reduce the per capita carbon footprint of Trull?	Distance to local services and amenities Energy efficiency of buildings and transport Percentage of energy in the area generated from renewable sources	

SEA Objective		Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal...		Indicators to help inform the decision making criteria (this list is not exhaustive)	
6	Environmental quality: Reduce air, soil and water pollution.	Q6a	Will it prevent or reduce pollution and the effects of pollution?	Ecological and chemical quality of water bodies	Number of water pollution incidents, including drainage and sewer overflows
		Q7a	Will it provide a mix of good-quality housing?	Risk of pollution to air, water and soil Varied housing mix	Housing affordability
7	Housing: Ensure that existing and future residents have the opportunity to live in a decent home.	Q7b	Will it provide decent, affordable homes?	Percentage of dwellings delivered as affordable housing	Number of extra care homes and other specialist homes
		Q8a	Will it reduce the need to travel?	Number of homes meeting Lifetime Homes design criteria Distance to place of work	Distance to local amenities and key services Distance to existing or proposed bus routes Frequency of bus services Proximity and connectivity of walking and cycling links Distance to train station Levels of congestion
8	Transport and accessibility: Improve the existing transport network, improve travel choice and connectivity, reduce the need to travel by car and reduce the negative impact of transport on the environment. Improve accessibility for everyone to local amenities, community facilities and services.	Q8b	Will it promote travel by a range of sustainable transport modes (i.e. walking/cycling/public transport)?	Distance to existing or proposed bus routes	Frequency of bus services
		Q8c	Will it help to reduce congestion?	Proximity and connectivity of walking and cycling links	Distance to train station Levels of congestion
9	Health and wellbeing: Maintain and improve the health, well-being and community cohesion of the population and reduce social deprivation.	Q9a	Will it improve access for all to leisure and recreational facilities?	Travel time by public transport to nearest health centre and sports facilities	Provision of and accessibility of open accessible greenspace and GI
		Q9b	Will it improve access for all to health facilities including GP surgeries?	Accessibility to sports facilities e.g. football pitches, playing fields, tennis courts and leisure centres Accessibility of healthcare facilities Area of community floorspace per resident	Accessibility to sports facilities e.g. football pitches, playing fields, tennis courts and leisure centres Accessibility of healthcare facilities Area of community floorspace per resident

SEA Objective		Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal...		Indicators to help inform the decision making criteria (this list is not exhaustive)	
10	Material Assets: Protect and conserve natural resources. Reduce waste generation and disposal, and promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle/compost, energy recovery and disposal.	Q10a	Will it utilise previously developed, degraded and under-used land?	Re-use of previously developed land	
		Q10b	Will it lead to the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?	Area of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to development	
		Q10c	Will it improve existing infrastructure, particularly gas, electricity and water infrastructure?	Connectivity of infrastructure	
		Q10d	Will it lead to reduced consumption of materials and resources and encourage recycling of waste?	Percentage of waste recycled Percentage of waste generated	
11	Economy and Employment: Promote a strong, balanced and sustainable economy. Retain existing businesses and associated employment, while developing new businesses and associated employment opportunities.	Q11a	Will it increase accessibility of suitable employment within Trull?	Accessibility of employment opportunities	
		Q11b	Will it enable retention and growth of existing business and protect existing employment land that has a continued economic role?	Levels of employment and unemployment	
		Q11c	Will it help new businesses to establish in the area?	Number of new business start-ups as a result of the development	

6.3. Table 4 below indicates how these 12 draft objectives relate to the environmental issues listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. The objectives in Table 3 are appropriate for the more general nature of a neighbourhood plan that will be used to manage development in the neighbourhood area.

Table 4 Links between the draft SA objectives and the SEA Directive issues:

Revised Cholsey SA Framework	Air	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Climatic factors	Cultural heritage	Human Health	Landscape	Material Assets	Population	Soil	Water
<b>SA1</b> Biodiversity and geodiversity: Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.										
<b>SA2</b> Landscape and townscape: Conserve and enhance the landscape and, in particular, those areas designated for their landscape / townscape value. Ensure development is of a high quality design and reinforces local distinctiveness.										
<b>SA3</b> Cultural heritage: Conserve and enhance the historic environment, and, in particular, those areas designated for their heritage importance.										
<b>SA4</b> Climate change adaptation: Plan for the anticipated levels of climate change.										
<b>SA5</b> Climate change mitigation Reduce contributions to climate change through a) sustainable building practices and b) maximising potential for renewable energy and c) energy conservation and minimising use of fossil fuels.										
<b>SA6</b> Environmental quality Reduce air and water pollution and maintain natural resources.										
<b>SA7</b> Housing Ensure that existing and future residents have the opportunity to live in a decent home.										
<b>SA8</b> Transport and accessibility: Improve the existing transport network, improve travel choice and connectivity, reduce the need to travel by car and reduce the negative impact of transport on the environment. Improve accessibility for everyone to local amenities, community facilities and services.										
<b>SA9</b> Health and wellbeing Maintain and improve the health, well-being and community cohesion of the population and reduce social deprivation.										
<b>SA10</b> Material Assets Protect and conserve natural resources. Reduce waste generation and disposal, and promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle/compost, energy recovery and disposal.										
<b>SA11</b> Economy and employment To assist in the development of a thriving and varied economy, including tourism, in Cholsey and the development of a skilled workforce by raising education achievement.										

6.4. Our SA objectives will not always be compatible with each other. The matrix in Table 5 below shows where conflicts may arise. For instance, our objective 1 to help meet housing needs may conflict with objective 6, to reduce the impact car travel, and objective 9 to address the causes of climate change. The neighbourhood plan sustainability appraisal should identify whether proposals have sought a 'win-win' or compromise solution, where development meeting one objective will proceed in a way which helps to meet, to some extent at least, a conflicting objective recognising this may not always be feasible.

Table 5 Matrix of Internal compatibility between objectives

Option	SA Objectives														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Cultural heritage	Landscape	Biodiversity	Flood Risk	C. Change Mitigation	C. Change Adaptation	Natural Resources	Pollution	Waste	Transport	Rural Barriers	Countryside access	Affordable housing	Health, Wellbeing	Economy
A	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	--	+/-	+/-	-	0	-	-	-	++	+/-	+/-

6.5. In the neighbourhood plan we will carry out a comparative analysis of housing sites as a part of our assessment before any allocations are made. These will appear in the Site Assessment Background Paper prepared for plan and will be used to inform the sustainability appraisal of the housing sites. It is anticipated that the site-specific criterion will include (although not necessarily restricted to) the following:

- Landscape sensitivity and character
- Proximity to the AONB
- Historic environment
- Potentially workable mineral deposits
- MAFF / DEFRA provisional agricultural land classification
- Biodiversity
- Proximity to watercourses
- Flood zone
- Contaminated land
- Archaeology
- Statutory public rights of way
- Permeability/other possible pedestrian cycle links
- Existing nearby bus routes
- Vehicular accesses to public highways
- Distance from facilities

## 7. Next Steps - Sustainability Appraisal in the Neighbourhood Plan Preparation

- 7.1. The neighbourhood plan will contain its own planning objectives, and the guidance states that these should be tested for compatibility with the SA Framework objectives. We did this using the matrix in Table 7 below. A plus (+) in a green matrix cell indicates that the local plan objective is potentially consistent with an SA objective, and a minus (-) in a red cell indicates potential inconsistency. Where the relationship between objectives is uncertain, the cell is unmarked.
- 7.2. Where the neighbourhood plan allocates land for housing there may be a choice between two or more alternatives or options. We shall include the consideration of options for development in the SA for the neighbourhood plan.
- 7.3. The SA will test each option on the extent to which it assists achievement of the sustainability objective. This will inform the choice of the preferred option but does not mean we must choose the highest scoring option. The process will help identify appropriate mitigation measures. We will consult the community on housing site options. Any new options emerging after the SA is undertaken will still be subjected to SA.

7.4. We will prepare a pre-submission version of the neighbourhood plan containing the site-specific proposals and other policies and will carry out a consultation on this. The plan will then be amended as appropriate to take account of comments received and a final draft version will be submitted to SODC for examination. SODC will carry out another formal public participation exercise involving the local community and stakeholders on the submitted neighbourhood plan. Representations received will be submitted along with the neighbourhood plan to the independent examiner.

7.5. We will appraise the pre-submission and submission versions of the neighbourhood plan using the testing matrix in Table 8 below. [This matrix is designed to meet the SEA Directive's requirements:](#)

["the likely significant effects on the environment, including such issues as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors."](#)

7.6. The appraisal of significant effects ["should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects."](#)

7.7. The guidance suggests that the SA should concentrate on the **significant** environmental, economic and social impacts. [Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) defines how likely significant effects should be identified. The most relevant of these to the production of the neighbourhood plan are:

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of options
- the cumulative impact of options including relevant options in neighbouring areas
- risks to human health or the environment
- geographical scale
- value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage
- exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
- intensive land use
- effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community, or international protection status



Table 8 below provides an example of the testing matrix we will use to appraise neighbourhood plan options against the SA Framework.

Table 8 Example testing matrix for documenting the appraisal of neighbourhood plan option against the SA Framework.

	Sustainability Objective 1 - To help meet local housing needs and provide residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home and in a good environment supported by appropriate levels of infrastructure				
Local plan option	Overall nature of effect	Short term	Med. term	Long term	Assessment of effect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likelihood, duration, frequency and reversibility of effect</li> <li>• Cumulative impact</li> <li>• Cross-boundary issues</li> <li>• Risk to human health and the environment</li> <li>• Geographical scale of effect</li> <li>• Impact on valuable, vulnerable or designated area</li> <li>• Recommendations for mitigation or improvement</li> </ul>
Option 1	++	0	+	++	Assessment of option 1 using criteria above.
Option 2	-	—	+	?	Assessment of option 2 using criteria above.
Option 12	?	?	+	-	Assessment of option 12 using criteria above.
Summary of options' effects on the objective	Summary of options' impact on all objectives				
Conclusions					
Recommendation					
Key	Will the option make a positive or negative contribution to the appraisal objective? ++ major + minor positive – minor negative — major negative 0 neutral ? uncertain				

- 7.8. Carrying out a sustainability appraisal on developing options and policies is an iterative process in plan preparation. Identifying the significant effects of an option, proposal or policy may reveal a major negative effect on an SA objective or on several SA objectives, so the recommendation in the SA testing process may be that the option or policy is not included in the plan. We would then choose a different option or policy and redo the SA process. If the alternative option or policy performs significantly better than the first then it is likely to be carried forward into the plan.
- 7.9. Where SA testing shows negative effects that can be overcome by mitigating measures, then the recommendation of the SA testing process may be that an option could be pursued provided that the planning system can secure appropriate mitigation.
- 7.10. The SA testing process should also consider whether an option's positive effects need to be guaranteed by the implementation of protection measures.
- 7.11. In other cases an effect may be uncertain because it will depend on how an option is implemented and this is not known at the plan preparation stage. The recommendation in this case may be an advisory note for policy requirements or policy criteria to ensure that detailed development proposals include measures to deliver positive effects for SA objectives.
- 7.12. The SA process is designed to inform the choices made in the plan's development but this does not mean we must choose the highest scoring option. Often the appraisal process will identify pros and cons for options and policies and we will need to have regard to community preferences and the neighbourhood plan objectives.
- 7.13. The SA recommendation should specify what mitigation is required, and the report will record how decisions have been arrived at and what mitigation measures are needed to ensure an option or policy delivers positive effects.

### **Undertaking the appraisal**

- 7.14. The appraisals, as set out in Stages B and C of Figure 1, will be undertaken alongside the plan preparation. Persons or bodies with acknowledged expertise in SA will be engaged to scrutinise the process and to assure the quality of all stages of the work.

## **8. Task A5 Consulting on the Scoping Report**

- 8.1. The guidance considers stakeholder consultation at Stage A to be particularly important. The Directive sets out certain statutory requirements for formal consultation on this scoping report and this includes seeking the views of the following prescribed bodies:

- [The Environment Agency](#)
- [Natural England](#)
- [English Heritage](#)

8.2. In addition, we will also consult South Oxfordshire District Council as the local planning authority, and the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONB Conservation Board, since parts of Cholsey lie in or adjacent to the AONBs.

- other groups and bodies that have social, environmental and economic interests and expertise
- residents
- development industry and landowners
- anyone else who has subscribed to our consultation database

If you wish to raise any queries regarding this document or what it includes, please contact the Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan Team using the details below:

Email: [info@cholsey-plan.com](mailto:info@cholsey-plan.com)

Phone: 01491 652255 (Cholsey Parish Council)

If you would like to make a complaint please write to:

The Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan Team

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