

CLARIFICATION NOTE

Project: Burcot & Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Plan
Date: 26 August 2021

Neighbourhood Development Order: Site Selection

Purpose

The purpose of this Clarification Note is to explain the origin and outcome of the site selection process and how it was informed by a workshop held with representatives of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) and officers of South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) on 16 January 2019.

Background

The community had been working on the Plan from 2014 to 2018 and through consultation had received a steer from residents that it should explore ways in which the Plan may secure the future of the parish amenities, including a site for a new surgery, and some new low cost homes. On joining the project in autumn 2018, I advised the NPSG of the significant limitations on neighbourhood planning in the Green Belt and how its ambition could only be progressed through a planning application or Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) route.

The NPSG had itself looked at the SODC Green Belt studies and had identified five potential locations on the edges of Clifton Hampden and Burcot where development may be plausible (policy constraints notwithstanding). I advised that the NPSG workshopped the options with SODC. The NPSG prepared a specification for what development proposition it wanted to explore at the workshop and a plan showing the sites.

My advice was that the NPSG should seek to engage paragraph 146(f) of the then National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) by using an NDO to make the proposals, rather than attempt to argue 'very special circumstances' for inappropriate development in the Green Belt (§144) or to make the 'limited infill in villages' argument (§145(e)). In my opinion (subsequently validated by SODC), only the surgery relocation could make a successful §144 case and given the scale of the NPSG's emergent requirement for a development of a new surgery and of around 25 houses, SODC's definition of infill in the Local Plan effectively prevented any of the sites making the §145 case.

I also advised the NPSG that it would be helpful to have a number of potential sites to negotiate with landowners to help it to maximise its leverage of community benefit from this exercise.

The Workshop

At the workshop The NPSG and I presented the specification (set out in Appendix 1) and explained that our goal was to review sites against the policy criteria set out in the specification. One of these criteria was that the site should “preserve the overall openness of the Green Belt, and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it” (as per §146).

It was agreed at the workshop that two more sites (G-H on the attached plan) on the south side of the Abingdon Road and an extension to the site on the allotments (Site A+) should be considered against the specification and the §146 tests. All the workshop attendees were invited to score the eight sites (A – H on the attached plan), noting that one (A) had the potential to extend behind the allotments (into A+), against the specification.

SODC Officers explained that a formal view from the council on individual sites would require using the Council's formal pre-application chargeable service. Officers proceeded to take part in the workshop with a view to providing assistance to the NPSG in their assessment of sites.

SODC Officers expressed concerns about most sites. Officers noted that Site H sits in an open and elevated position at the South Western edge of the built form of the village. Development on this site would be highly visible and harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. SODC Officers also raised concerns about access to this site from the bend on the A415.

In relation to Site G, SODC officers noted that the land rises towards the West. There are existing buildings to the South and partly to the East. Site H is located immediately to the South West of Site G and is open in nature forming a plateau. There are no buildings to the North of Site G. Although Site G has some degree of enclosure to its South and East, development on the Northern and Western part of the site would be highly visible and harmful to the openness of the Green Belt.

Site B is surrounded by buildings on three sides. Development on this site would sit within a gap and would be closely related to the built form of the village. SODC officers advised this site had potential and should be explored further through a formal pre-application.

SODC Officers expressed concerns about Sites A and A+, the extent of the sites identified on the map would result in development significantly extending the built form of the village and encroaching onto open countryside. Similarly, by virtue of their location highly exposed to open countryside and not being adjoined by built form on more than two sides, Sites C, D, E and F were also considered to have

potential to significantly encroach onto open countryside and harm the openness of the Green Belt.

I queried SODC officers regarding the potential of part of Sites A and A+. After discussion, SODC officers accepted that a narrow strip on the eastern part of the site had potential by virtue of being contiguous to the built form on three sides, partly tucked in behind the village hall screening it from the South, adjoining housing along Watery Lane screening it from the East, and screened by the row of cottages to the North.

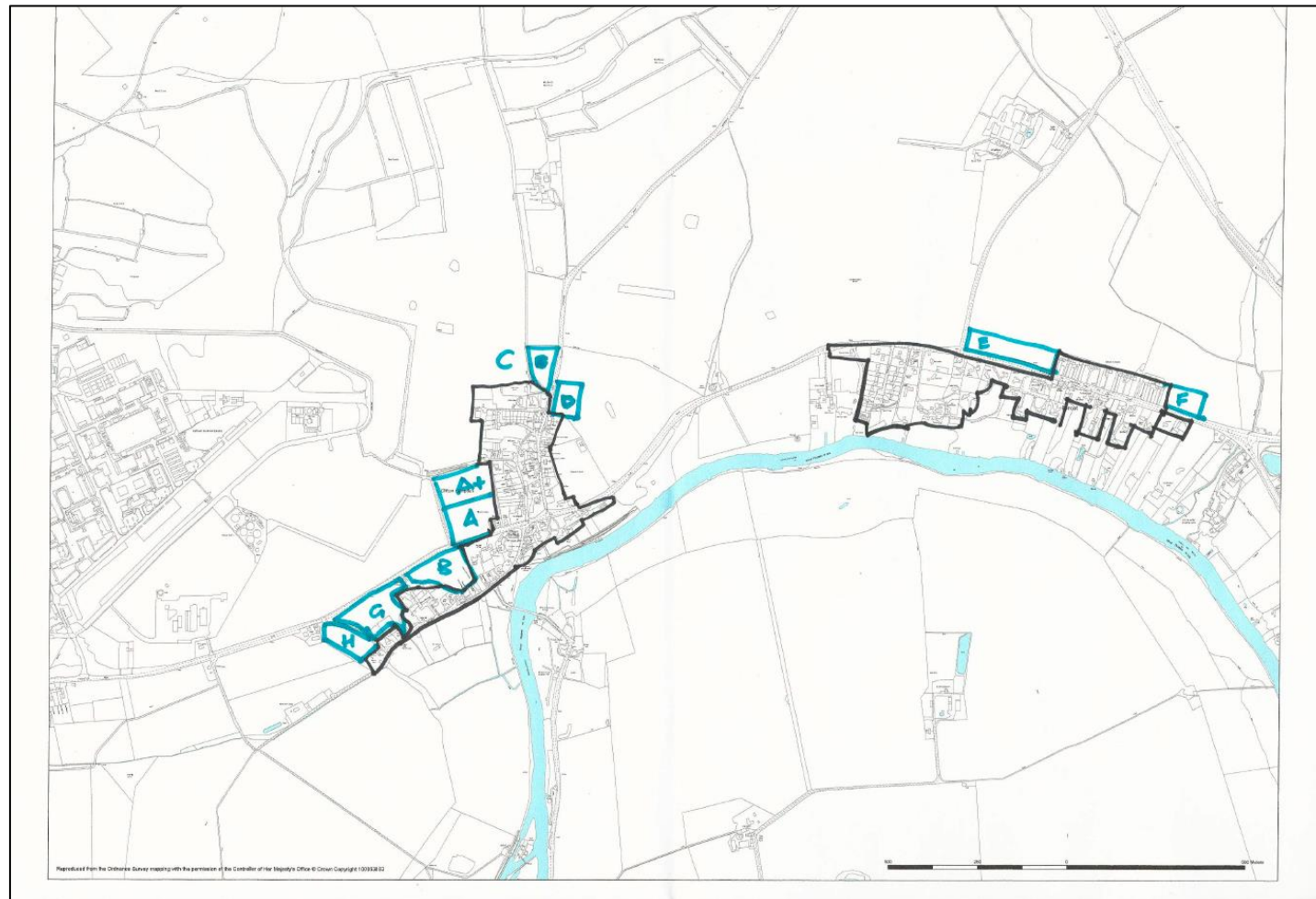
In considering the sites against the specification, a view emerged early on that the two Burcot sites were comparatively too remote to meet the specification, which preferably required a location in close proximity to school, shop/post office, village hall, car park (to minimise car dependency). However, the exercise was not completed when it became clear that SODC officers judged that only part of Site A and site B had the potential to meet the openness test and should be explored further through the formal pre-application advice process.

Although disappointed to have only two sites left to pursue, the NPSG agreed with my advice that in judging Green Belt policy conformity, it would be essential to have the support of SODC at the examination of the NDO in due course.

The Outcome

The nature and outcome of the workshop was presented to the NPSG on 29 January 2019 with an explanation of how a combination of the specification and NPPF tests had been applied. Whilst I did not attend this steering group meeting, my advice was sought in advance by the chair to ensure that his understanding of the technical reasons why the neighbourhood plan itself could not allocate land in the Green Belt for development and why there are three NPPF options in pursuing the Plan vision and objectives, was correct.

At the meeting, the NPSG agreed to take forward sites A and B by commissioning concept schemes for each to inform a pre-application consultation with SODC. Subsequently, the concept schemes were prepared and the NPSG sought pre-application advice from SODC.



Appendix 1

Burcot and Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Plan

Name:

Site Option Modelling Assessment Sheet

Policy	Option A	Option B
<p>Vision One Parish with two distinct villages each with their own distinct identity, with shared amenities</p>		
<p>Housing: 10-15% growth to support the needs of the community and sustain facilities</p> <p>To integrate new housing and facilities into the Parish of Burcot and Clifton Hampden so that today's distinctive character and identity of the two villages is maintained. (Character assessments included at the end of this document). Condenses to:</p> <p>Burcot: generally medium, large and very large houses on generous plots. High car dependency</p> <p>Clifton Hampden: mix of housing sizes and plot sizes types in 4 mini-communities: High Street (old estate); Courtiers (1960's development around 'green'), Oxford Road (Backing onto Rec), Watery Lane ('Lane' character). Low car dependency internally as amenities within short walking distance</p> <p>20-30 low cost homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rented • Retirement homes to downsize without moving away • Starter Homes • Key Workers <p>In close proximity to school, shop/post office, village hall, car park (to minimise car dependency)</p> <p>5-10 larger market homes to generate funds to be used for the benefit of the community through the Community Land Trust</p>		

Policy	Option A	Option B
<p>Green Belt Review Purpose: To preserve the overall openness of the Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; <p>To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns (villages) merging into one another</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clifton Hampden-Culham (+ culham new town) Clifton Hampden-Burcot Burcot-Berinsfield <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve the special character of Oxford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clifton Hampden Estate Village and Amenities 'Clover leaf' communities 		
<p>Surgery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5ha for a new surgery including car park Release current site with potential for additional housing <p>Located for convenience of villagers, close proximity to school, shop/post office, village hall, car park (to minimise car dependency)</p>		

Policy	Option A	Option B
<p>School</p> <p>Tbc – strategy awaited Assume some additional space required</p>		
<p>Village Hall and Recreation Ground Amenities</p> <p>Keep the Village Hall where it is and renovate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd room, meeting room, toilets <p>Combine the existing facilities on the Recreation Ground into a new building.</p>		
<p>Green Infrastructure</p>		
<p>Designating important areas of open/green space within the villages, i.e. the recreation ground and The Wharf</p>		
<p>Resisting development within the identified Flood Plain</p>		
<p>Opportunities for the enhancement and protection of the River Thames, the Thames Footpath and the surrounding landscape</p>		

Policy	Option A	Option B
Defining a network of footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways		
<p>The Wharf</p> <p>Rebuild boathouse on the Wharf</p>		
<p>Traffic (Minimise car dependency)</p> <p>To position development so as to maximise the potential to walk between houses and amenities: school, post office and stores, surgery, village hall, recreation ground, church, pubs.</p> <p>To prevent sprawl and ribbon development which would increase car usage for local journeys within the village</p>		
<p>Other</p> <p>Burial Ground. To provide additional burial grounds. – assume 0.1 acre plus access</p>		
<p>Other</p> <p>Allotments. Retain some allotments on current or new site – assume 1 acre</p>		