

WORMINGHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Let's set the future of our village!

Sustainability Appraisal

Final Report



January 2018

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Non-technical summary

This document is the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan. It ensures that the Neighbourhood Plan promotes sustainable development as required and explained by the National Planning Policy Framework and fulfills the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC.

It is important to read this document alongside the Neighbourhood Plan itself, the Scoping Report, the Site Assessment Report and the Consultation Report. This Report incorporates updated assessments of Neighbourhood Plan Policies that have been amended following the consultation at Regulation 14 (Pre-Submission).

The structure and content of this document is as follows:

Section 1 gives the background and context of the NP and Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)

Section 2 tests the Neighbourhood Plan against the SA Objectives:

- highlights the Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and tests them against the SA framework identified in the SA Scoping Report
- considers the selection and assessment of alternatives and the reasons for selecting the preferred alternatives
- considers the first choice site against the SA Framework. Full analysis of all the site options are assessed against the SA Framework separately in the Site Assessment Report. The site which has progressed furthest has been subjected to a more thorough SA/SEA process to look at short medium and long term impacts and any mitigation measures proposed.
- tests the Submission policies against the SA Framework. It looks at scope for improvement and mitigation of the various options and overall impact of the Plan.

Section 3 sets out Next Steps and references monitoring.

1. Introduction

This report is the Final Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) of the Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan (December 2017). The final Neighbourhood Plan will be 'made' by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) and will form part of the planning process. As well as the prominent issue of where housing land will be allocated, the Plan will deal with a number of other key issues. This sustainability appraisal report has been produced in order to comply with European Directive 2001/42/EC concerning Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). All land-use plans likely to have effects upon the environment are required to undergo this SEA process.

The SA Scoping Report was published in August 2017 and forms the background for this report. It was updated following comments from the statutory consultees in September 2017. The Draft SA/SEA Report was published in September 2017 to accompany the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan.

1.1. Worminghall and its Location

Worminghall is a rural village located in the west of Aylesbury Vale, surrounded by gently undulating farmland. The village is beside a brook that forms most of the eastern boundary of the parish. Worminghall Brook joins the River Thame, which forms the southernmost part of the eastern boundary. The western boundary of the parish also forms part of the county boundary with Oxfordshire. The village is about 4.5 miles (7 km) west of the Oxfordshire market town of Thame and is connected to the neighbouring villages by unclassified rural roads.

The village is a mixture of age and type of house with no real 'typical' style or pattern of building. There are relatively few listed buildings and there is no Conservation Area. In terms of biodiversity, the main feature is Bernwood Forest at the extreme west of the Parish. There are few local amenities, just a pub, village hall and church. Residents have to drive out of the village to attend work and school as the bus service is also very poor. Notably, there are no accessible open spaces for informal or formal recreation nor play facilities for children.

1.2. Neighbourhood Planning and Policy Context

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NP's) must comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local plans as set out in the Localism Act 2011.

Following a finding by the Planning Inspectorate that certain aspects of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan were unsound, the Plan was withdrawn on 5 February 2014. Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) are developing a new plan: the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013 - 2033 (VALP). This will include the overall strategy for the district, alongside site allocations (where needed), and development management policies. In summer 2016, the Draft Plan was published and in Autumn 2017 the Submission Draft was published. This Plan is now at a fairly advanced stage, and the direction of some of the policies will be taken into account in the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Currently there is no up to date Local Plan in place, nor is there likely to be one in place for a year or so. However, the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published in March 2014 which clearly states that ‘neighbourhood plans can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan’.

1.3. Extent of the Neighbourhood Plan Area

As part of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, a separate consultation on the location and extent of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is required in order to identify a neighbourhood area. The Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan Area is coincident with the parish boundary and is depicted at Figure 1.

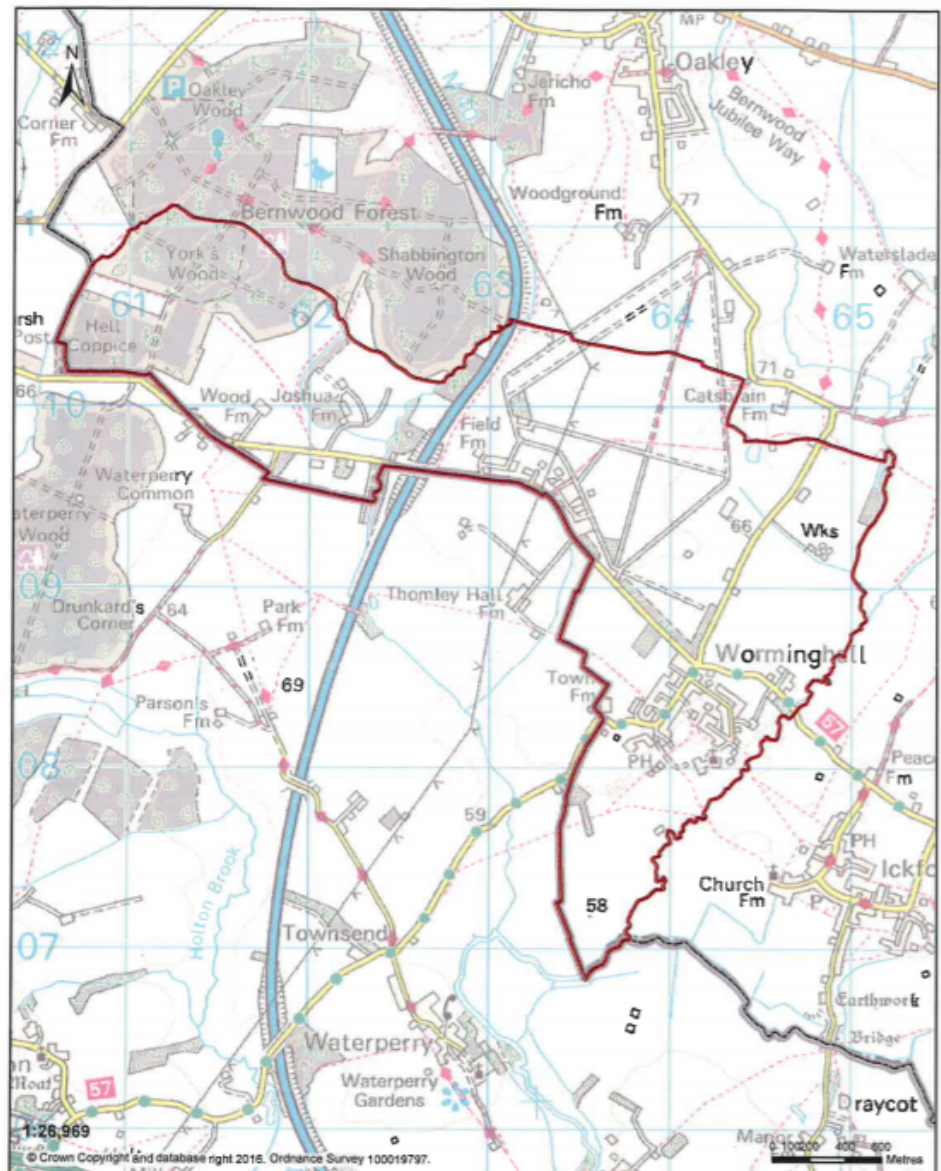


Figure 1: Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan Area

1.4. Methodology

This SEA/SA has been undertaken by the same team that has written the Neighbourhood Plan ensuring that no information has been missed through the process. Guidance has been taken from the Levett-Therivel ‘DIY SA:Sustainability Appraisal of Neighbourhood Plans’.

2. Testing against the framework

The SA Framework (Table 1) was initially developed within the Scoping Report and is the main tool for appraising the Worminghall NP. The Framework is used to test the objectives of the Plan to ensure that they are as sustainable as possible. The Framework is also used to test the site options and to appraise the plan as a whole.

Table 1: SA Framework

	Criteria
1	Development within or adjacent to the existing built up area of the village
2	Provision of a play and recreation area on site or contributions towards such a facility
3	Provision of smaller homes
4	Impact of traffic - to reduce speed of traffic/potential for traffic calming
5	Access
6	To conserve and enhance historic (listed) buildings
7	To conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes
8	To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and street scene and maintain important views
9	To maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness including the pattern of development
10	To maintain and strengthen the rural character of the village by providing small scale development (up to 15 houses)
11	Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
12	To ensure that the location and design of new development does not increase flood risk
13	To reuse previously developed land
14	To support existing community facilities and provide opportunities for walking to village facilities

2.1. Vision & Objectives

The Vision for the Neighbourhood Plan was developed by the Parish, closely following the outcomes found during the Community-led Plan process.

Vision: To improve the amenities, facilities and environment in our village, accompanying the gentle growth in housing and numbers of residents living in Worminghall, alongside encouraging a younger age demographic of our village.

Objectives

1. To allow carefully designed new housing on a small scale in village locations to reflect the rural character of the parish
2. To achieve new recreational space and play facilities for children and support the existing community facilities.
3. To protect and enhance the natural environment and setting of the village and retain the rural quality of the area.
4. To manage and reduce traffic issues within and around the village

Table 2: Comparing NP Objectives against Sustainability Objectives

Key : Y: positive impact, O: Neutral impact, N: Negative impact, -: Not applicable

Sustainability Objectives	Neighbourhood Plan Objectives	To allow carefully designed new housing on a small scale in village locations to reflect the rural character of the parish	To achieve new recreational space and play facilities for children and support the existing community facilities.	To protect and enhance the natural environment and setting of the village and retain the rural quality of the area.	To manage and reduce traffic issues within and around the village
Development within or adjacent to the existing built up area of the village		Y	O	Y	Y
Provision of a play and recreation area on site or contributions towards such a facility		-	Y	-	N
Provision of smaller homes		Y	-	Y	-
Impact of traffic - to reduce speed of traffic/potential for traffic calming		Y	N	Y	Y

Access	-	-	-	-
To conserve and enhance historic (listed) buildings	Y	-	Y	-
To conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes	Y	-	Y	Y
To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and street scene and maintain important views	-	N	Y	O
To maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness including the pattern of development	Y	Y	Y	O
To maintain and strengthen the rural character of the village by providing small scale development (up to 15 houses)	Y	-	Y	N
Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	N	N	Y	-
To ensure that the location and design of new development does not increase flood risk	Y	Y	Y	-
To reuse previously developed land	Y	Y	Y	-
To support existing community facilities and provide opportunities for walking to village facilities	Y	Y	O	-

2.2. Policy Options/Considerations of Alternatives

This section of the report includes and outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives and the likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives and an outline for the reasons for selecting preferred alternatives. Plan making for the village has been underway since 2013 with the Community-Led Plan and since 2016, the Neighbourhood Plan. These have essentially provided the options for policy making within the topic areas identified by the Steering Group. Questionnaires were sent out and some testing of objectives was done through this. Full details of these are set out in the Consultation Report.

These options included

- The number of houses that should be provided through the NP
- The type of housing that should be provided through the NP
- The location of housing
- The need for a play area depending on whether new housing is built.

The assessment of reasonable alternatives for quantity of housing has been undertaken by appraising the relationship between the SA Framework and the options. Generally speaking, where the impact comes out as neutral or unknown, it is because location is critical to assessment of the impact. The remaining options cannot be tested using the SA framework as they are related to a 'have a policy/do not have a policy' scenario.

2.3. Housing options

There is a clear need for housing across Aylesbury Vale District. The quantum of housing required was set as 11 for Worminghall in the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP). However, there is no suggestion in the Submission version of the VALP for any allocations or requirements for Worminghall because it is classed as a 'smaller village'. However, given the changing policy background, the scenarios for housing numbers tested were useful. Clearly the more houses provided, the larger the impact upon factors such as landscape and biodiversity. This is because of the rural nature of the village and the topography. The majority of the sites that could accommodate development will extend the built environment out into the countryside. The location of housing is critical in providing sustainable housing development. All the potential sites for housing were tested (see Site Assessment Report) against the Framework. The outcome of the deliberations were that two sites combined could accommodate 15 houses (plus 3 already given outline planning permission) in total and this is reflected in the Allocation in the Submission Neighbourhood Plan. This approach takes into account

- the SA findings that allocating below 5 or above 15 houses may result in a negative impact on several factors in the SA framework
- the likelihood that AVDC will be requiring more development than that set out in the VALP.

Table 3: Testing Housing Options against Sustainability Objectives

Key : Y: positive impact, O: Neutral or unknown impact, N: Negative impact, -: Not applicable

Sustainability Objectives	Neighbourhood Plan Options	Option A: 0-5 houses	Option B: 5-10 houses	Option C: 10-15 houses	Other (i.e. more than 15)
Development within or adjacent to the existing built up area of the village		O	O	O	O
Provision of a play and recreation area on site or contributions towards such a facility		N	Y	Y	Y
Provision of smaller homes		Y	Y	Y	Y
Impact of traffic - to reduce speed of traffic/potential for traffic calming		N	N	N	N
Access		-	-	-	-
To conserve and enhance historic (listed) buildings		O	O	O	O
To conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes		O	O	O	O

To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and street scene and maintain important views	O	O	O	O
To maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness including the pattern of development	Y	O	O	O
To maintain and strengthen the rural character of the village by providing small scale development (up to 15 houses)	N	Y	Y	N
Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	O	O	O	O
To ensure that the location and design of new development does not increase flood risk	O	O	O	O
To reuse previously developed land	O	O	O	O
To support existing community facilities and provide opportunities for walking to village facilities	Y	Y	Y	Y

2.4. Testing the site against the Sustainability Objectives, impacts and mitigation

The results of the table below has been used to inform the allocation policy in the Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-Submission) Draft. In particular the mitigation measures in table 4 have been directly used to set out criteria in Policy NH2. These criteria should ensure that when planning applications come forward for the two sites, the environmental impact of the new development is reduced.

Table 4: Testing the first choice site against Sustainability Objectives

	Short Term Impact	Long term impact	Mitigation measures
Development within or adjacent to the existing built up area of the village	Coldstream Farm lies within the existing built form of the village, although the field to the rear of the Clifden Arms would extend the built up area of the village.	The village envelope would be extended permanently	The future development must be designed coherently across both sites to reflect the pattern of development elsewhere in the village.
Provision of a play and recreation area on site or contributions towards such a facility	Play area to be provided on site	Play area to be provided on site	N/A
Provision of smaller homes	Smaller homes can be provided within the scope of 15-18 houses	Smaller and therefore more affordable homes will give choice to potential buyers	N/A
Impact of traffic - to reduce speed of traffic/potential for traffic calming	Construction Traffic will cause congestion. Completed development will increase traffic.	Completed development will increase traffic, although the entrance to the site is at one end of the village.	Ensure pedestrian links throughout the site, ensure design of access reduces impact of traffic as much as possible, provide generous parking for new residents
Access	There is an existing access used for the	More traffic will use the existing access	Highways (Bucks CC) will ensure design of access is safe

	Farm and bungalow on the site		
To conserve and enhance historic (listed) buildings	There is a listed building adjacent to the site, the setting of which will need to be respected through careful design.	There will be more buildings on the site adjacent to the listed building.	The design and location of the new buildings is very important to ensure that there is minimal impact on the listed building and its setting.
To conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes	There is no evidence at this stage of whether there are any archaeological remains on the site	Any evidence or remains would need to be recorded if required by AVDC/BCC	Any evidence or remains would need to be recorded if required by AVDC/BCC
To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and street scene and maintain important views	The site is currently shielded by vegetation/trees from the main part of the village. Some of this vegetation will be reduced. No important views would be compromised.	A carefully designed scheme would ensure integration into the character of the village street scene	A carefully designed scheme would ensure integration into the character of the village street scene
To maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness including the pattern of development	Coldstream Farm itself is part of the settlement. The field behind the pub will extend development out into the countryside.	The village envelope will be extended	A carefully designed scheme for future development must ensure it reflects the pattern of development elsewhere in the village.
To maintain and strengthen the rural character of the village by providing small scale development (up to 15 houses)	This site will provide 15 units in addition to the 3 that already have outline planning permission.	This site will provide 15 units in addition to the 3 that already have outline planning permission.	This site will provide 15 units in addition to the 3 that already have outline planning permission.
Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	Some impact will be inevitable on the current wildlife and flora on the site.	There will be more built development on the site which will reduce the amount of biodiversity. However, a native-species planting scheme will help reduce the impact over time.	A full survey of trees and natural features such as hedgerows will be required. Those features should be retained as far as possible together with additional native planting to reinforce the boundaries to the countryside beyond
To ensure that the location and design of new development	This site could be affected by surface water. The planning application will need to	Provided that the issue of flooding from surface water is considered at application stage, there	Potentially a SUDS scheme may be needed on this site.

does not increase flood risk	look at this issue. There is an existing pond on the site.	should be no long term impact.	
To reuse previously developed land	This site is partly previously developed, with chicken sheds and a bungalow on the site.	The scheme will occupy in part a previously built up site.	None
To support existing community facilities and provide opportunities for walking to village facilities	The site can provide a footpath link through a play area to the back of the pub.	New houses will bring new residents to support the limited local facilities.	New houses will bring new residents to support the limited local facilities. The footpath link will extend the village network of footpaths.

2.5. Testing Neighbourhood Plan Policies against the SA Objectives.

The NP policies have been re-ordered and amended following comments received on the Pre-Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan published in September 2017. Specifically, following comments from AVDC, Buckinghamshire County Council and Natural England, additions have been made to both policies and text to raise the content relating to biodiversity and green infrastructure. This strengthens the neighbourhood plan in terms of the environmental element of sustainability. The amended policies have been assessed in the table below.

Table 5: Testing Neighbourhood Plan Policies against Sustainability Objectives

Key : Y: positive impact, O: Neutral or unknown impact, N: Negative impact, -: Not applicable

Sustainability Objectives	Policies	SB1: Settlement Boundary	SB2:Open Countryside	NH1:New houses	NH2:Housing Mix	NH3: Coldstream Farm/Rear of Clifden Arms	RC1: Rural Character	CFR1:Community Facilities	CFR2:Recreation	CFR3: Footpaths	CH1:Heritage	TT1:Parking and Traffic
Development within or adjacent to the existing built up area of the village		Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	O	O	O	Y	O
Provision of a play and recreation area on site or contributions towards such a facility		O	O	O	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O

Sustainability Objectives	Policies	SB1: Settlement Boundary	SB2: Open Countryside	NH1: New houses	NH2: Housing Mix	NH3: Coldstream Farm/Rear of Clifden Arms	RC1: Rural Character	CFR1: Community Facilities	CFR2: Recreation	CFR3: Footpaths	CH1: Heritage	TT1: Parking and Traffic
Provision of smaller homes		Y	O	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	O	Y	O
Impact of traffic - to reduce speed of traffic/potential for traffic calming		O	Y	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	Y	O	Y
Access		-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
To conserve and enhance historic (listed) buildings		Y	O	Y	O	N	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O
To conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes		Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	O	O	Y	O
To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and street scene and maintain important views		Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O
To maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness including the pattern of development		Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	O
To maintain and strengthen the rural character of the village by providing small scale development (up to 15 houses)		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O
Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity		O	Y	O	O	N	Y	O	O	O	O	O
To ensure that the location and design of new development does not increase flood risk		O	O	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O
To reuse previously developed land		Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O

Sustainability Objectives	Policies	SB1: Settlement Boundary	SB2: Open Countryside	NH1: New houses	NH2: Housing Mix	NH3: Coldstream Farm/Rear of Clifden Arms	RC1: Rural Character	CFR1: Community Facilities	CFR2: Recreation	CFR3: Footpaths	CH1: Heritage	TT1: Parking and Traffic
To support existing community facilities and provide opportunities for walking to village facilities		Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	Y

2.6. Summary

In considering the overall impact of the Neighbourhood Plan policies, there appears to be very few negative impacts overall. The policies themselves have incorporated mitigation measures wherever possible, for example requiring respect for setting of the nearby listed buildings. Any additional development of any type has the potential to impact on the landscape, biodiversity and increased use of the car, but the location of the new housing development is sustainable in that it is as close to the village as possible, provides a range of homes for local people and potential for providing play facilities, footpath links and planting.

3. Next Steps

The SA report will be submitted to AVDC alongside the Submission NP. Additional background documents will also be available. After the Plan is adopted, its significant impacts will be monitored.

Measures for monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan are set out in that document.