

Appendix A: Site Assessment Report

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Introduction

This Annex provides summary Site Assessment Reports in support of the site selections made in our Neighbourhood Plan. The reports cover a total of ten sites brought forward or available to be considered for development at the time of submission of this Plan. Eight of the sites, designated BEN1 to BEN8, appear in SODC's Local Plan 2031 Refined Options, dated February 2015. The last two sites, designated as BEN9 and BEN10 for consistency, were added to the schedule of potential development sites following consultation comments from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), the owner.

It should be noted that sites BEN3 and BEN4 are currently the subject of a single planning application.

The NP Team visited each site and reviewed its suitability for development against a set of key considerations, consistently applied to all sites:

- Landscape Character & Setting
- Green Infrastructure
- Heritage
- Core Facilities
- Transport
- Other

The conclusions reached take full account of both the SODC Refined Options document and the findings and recommendations of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, which accompanies this Plan. In addition, they recognise the high level of support expressed by the community regarding the Relief Road and the practical implications this must have on site selection.

As well as the summary Site Assessment Reports below, more details can be found in the following Appendices:

- Appendix A - Heritage Site Assessments
- Appendix B - Green Infrastructure Site Assessments
- Appendix C - Site Character Assessments
- Appendix D - Transport Site Assessments

Landscape comments take account of the Landscape Capacity Assessment for Sites on the Edge of the Larger Villages of South Oxfordshire, prepared for SODC 2015 by Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd, pp 21, 23, 35, 36 and 75-130. See:

http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=735321433&CODE=C F6B76B66ACBA682E288A973D35F55E5

Comments on noise take account of the SODC Benson Noise Assessment 2015, available at:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Benson%20noise%20assessment.pdf>

BEN1: Land to the north of Littleworth Road

Site Area: 23.87 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Note – Part of the land covered by this site assessment and identified as ‘BEN1 Phase 1’ is already approved and under construction as “Hopefield Grange”. The rest of the land, identified as ‘BEN1 Phase 2’ is the subject of a current application.

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Low-lying land extending along the Elm/Lady Brook, with very slight rise to north and west. Projects out of main village settlement into open agricultural vale. Forms part of the wider rural setting of Benson and the North Wessex Downs AONB. Development will be visible in views of the landscape and village as seen from Wittenham Clumps/NWD AONB and in Views 6 and 7 towards Chilterns AONB. Need to preserve hedges and trees along field boundaries to mitigate adverse impact.
2	Green infrastructure	Arable field (ALC 2, currently uncultivated as subject to planning applications) with watercourse running along western boundary. No notable biodiversity interest in field but area said to be used by farmland birds. Gappy hedgerow containing distinctive willow trees along western and northern boundary. South-eastern tip of site is close to Sunnyside green space and play area. Flood Zone 1, 2 & 3, with current planning application proposing new green space on Flood Zone 2 & 3 on western edge.
3	Heritage	Separated from Conservation Area by approved Phase 1 development adjoining Littleworth Road. Some impact on setting of mid C19 farmstead at Hale Farm (of local heritage note) – site is an enclosure field associated with this farm, and projects into its open rural setting. No known major archaeology, but evidence of agriculture from early prehistoric times. More significant evidence may arise, given proximity to river and traces of small Bronze/Iron Age settlement within approved development adjacent to Sunnyside.
4	Core facilities	Parish Hall, school, shops & library within walking distance as is the GP surgery and other village centre facilities.
5	Transport	Likely to increase traffic on B4009 and Church Road unless alternative provided. Changes already agreed with OCC to Littleworth Road judged unlikely to provide for major through traffic. No dedicated FPs or cycle ways. Northern part of site vital for any future Relief Road and land needs safeguarding. Access to public transport routes adequate. New crossing on B4009 a safety benefit but concerns over crossing to new school facilities. Full transport spatial assessment in Appendix D.
6	Other	Site earmarked for significant community facilities such as additional sports field for Benson school, Skate Park, green space and a new Community Facilities building. No adverse effects from noise of airfield during the day; mitigation needed for night-time effects.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
30/Oct/1961	P61/M1346	Mrs E Franklin	Land N of Littleworth Rd	10 houses on new road off Littleworth Rd	Refused - reasons not legible on decision document
8/Dec/1964	P64/M1059	Executors of J T Franklin (dec'd)	Plots fronting Oxford & Littlemore Rds	Residential development of 11 acres	Refused - excessive development, detrimental to village envelope, loss of agricultural land, inadequate roads
30/Jun/1971	P71/0548	Trustees of J P Franklin (dec'd)	Land at Oxford Rd, College Farm	Phased residential development starting with possible 10 acres	Refused - Outside village boundary, detrimental to rural amenities, loss of agricultural land, inadequate roads, no surface water drainage
31/Oct/1973	P73/1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
15/Nov/1973	P73/1126	R J Styles	Oxford Rd, Littleworth Rd, Benson Rd	Erection of Dwellinghouses, Main Distributor Rd	Refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
15/Nov/1973	P73/1127	R J Styles	Oxford Rd, Littleworth Rd, Benson Rd	Erection of Dwellinghouses, Accesses	Refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
5/Mar/2014	P14/S0673/FUL	R J Styles	Land north of Littleworth Rd	125 dwellings, 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows	Appealed on grounds of non-determination - appeal allowed
8/Aug/2014	P14/S2564/FUL	R J Styles	Land north of Littleworth Rd	125 dwellings, 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows	Lapsed on allowing of above appeal
19/Nov/2015	P15/S3923/FUL	R J & S Styles	Land north of Littleworth Rd	126 dwellings, 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows	Granted
28/Oct/2016	P16/S3611/FUL	Cala Homes	Land north of	187 dwellings	Granted
19/Nov/2015	P15/S3916/O	R J & S Styles	Land north of Littleworth Rd (Phase	241 dwellings	Application under consideration
5/Apr/2016	P16/S1139/O	R J & S Styles	Land north of Littleworth Rd (Phase	241 dwellings	

Benson NP Assessment

This site extends the village considerably beyond the existing settlement, with adverse effect on the landscape setting of the village and the AONBs, but offers reasonable access to the village centre. Development is necessary to deliver the Relief Road, in conjunction with sites BEN2, BEN3 & BEN4. It also offers scope for other important community facilities and green space.

Subject to formal commitment to adhere fully to the Benson Masterplan including delivery of the Relief Road and to mitigate adverse impact in accordance with site-specific policy NPn, BEN1 Phase 2 would be conformant with our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN2: Land to the west of Hale Road

Site Area: 3.36 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: arable

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Low-lying flat field connecting with site BEN1 but otherwise contained between Sunnyside, Hale Farm and Port Hill. Need to preserve hedge boundaries.
2	Green infrastructure	Site in agricultural use (arable crops) (ALC 2) with limited biodiversity interest in field, though area said to be used by farmland birds. Hedges on northern and eastern edge, and clumps of mature trees to the north of the site. In close proximity to Sunnyside green space and play area, and would provide good access out into wider countryside. Flood Zone 1.
3	Heritage	Separate from Conservation Area but adjacent to and part of setting of Hale Farm – of local heritage note. Development would close gap between village and farm. No known major archaeology but potential not yet investigated. Close to traces of small Bronze/Iron Age settlement to south west.
4	Core facilities	Distance from shops, Parish Hall, school, GP surgery & library is acceptable but current foot/cycle links poor.
5	Transport	Access from Hale Road – a narrow lane without footways and a difficult junction with the B4009 – not ideal. Likely to increase traffic issues in Castle Square, Oxford Road and Church Road unless new alternative provided, and increase parking issues in village centre. No dedicated FPs or cycleways. Forms part of route vital for any future Relief Road and land needs safeguarding. Access to local public transport routes adequate, but distant from main bus route. Full spatial assessment in Appendix D.
6	Other	Would consolidate built-up area, losing distinction between village and Port Hill/Hale Farm as outlying settlement. No adverse effects from noise of airfield during the day; mitigation needed for night-time effects.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
31/Oct/1973	P73/1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road - 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
7/Nov/2016	P16/S3736/SCR	Thomas Homes Ltd	Land off Hale Rd	Screening opinion requested - No details at this stage	No SEA required

Benson NP Assessment

This site represents efficient use of a modest area of land between BEN1 and BEN3&4 and is within acceptable walking distance of village facilities. Development is necessary to deliver the Relief Road, in conjunction with sites BEN1, BEN3 & BEN4.

Subject to formal commitment to adhere fully to the Benson Masterplan including delivery of the Relief Road and to site-specific policy NPn, BEN2 would be conformant with our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN3: Land to the east of Hale Road

Site Area: 7.04 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Western part of site relates to Sands Way and Port Hill Road. North-eastern part extends considerably from main built-up area into open fields that connect both with open agricultural vale below to north west and gently rising farmland to east. Openness is significant to separation between Benson and Rokemarsh. Site is on a slight ridge. Full development would appear prominent and sprawling in the rural landscape setting of the village and AONBs as seen in Views 7 and 8, and would significantly reduce Views at 9. Port Hill would lose identity as outlying rural settlement. Measures to mitigate prominence and avoid coalescence with Rokemarsh would be essential.
2	Green infrastructure	Area in agricultural use (ALC 2) comprising arable crops and semi-improved pasture, with limited biodiversity interest, though residents report seeing hares and partridge regularly. Hedge on southern boundary of BEN4 and western boundary of BEN3. Public footpath between the two fields provides access to wider countryside, but connects to Sunnyside green space and play area by a circuitous route. Flood Zone 1.
3	Heritage	Distant from Conservation Area. Minor impact on landscape setting of Hale Farm and listed rural cottages at Rokemarsh. Limited archaeological interest including Bronze Age holloway and ditch, and small rectangular Saxon(?) building between Sands Way and Port Hill Road.
4	Core facilities	Distance from shops, Parish Hall, school, GP surgery & library is significant but acceptable. Foot/cycle links poor
5	Transport	Issues with access from Hale Road (see BEN2). Likely to increase traffic issues in Castle Square, Oxford Road and Church Road unless alternative provided, and likely to add to parking issues in village. This is a vital area of land for any future Benson Relief road and needs safeguarding. Some distance from public transport routes. A full transport spatial assessment is in Appendix D.
6	Other	No adverse effects from noise of airfield during the day; mitigation needed for night-time effects.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
31/Oct/1973	P73/1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
25/May/2017	P17/S1964/O	David Wilson Homes Southern	Land to the north east of Benson to the north of Watlington Road/The Sands (B4009) and east of	Residential development of up to 240 homes, including safeguarding of Edge Rd	Application under consideration

Benson NP Assessment

North-eastern part of this site, if fully developed, would become distant from village facilities and extend considerably beyond the existing settlement onto higher ground, where it would detract from the rural landscape setting of the village and the AONBs. It would also significantly reduce the important landscape space between the village and Rokemarsh. More limited development to the west would be less harmful and would be essential to delivery of the Relief Road in conjunction with sites BEN1, BEN2 and BEN4.

Subject to formal commitment to adhere fully to the Benson Masterplan including delivery of the Relief Road and to mitigate adverse impact in accordance with site-specific policy NPn, BEN3 would be conformant with our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN4: Land to the north of Watlington Road

Site Area: 7.54 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: arable

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Extends very considerably from main built-up area into open fields that connect both with open agricultural vale to north west and gently rising farmland to east. On a slight ridge, above the vale and above the slope down towards Benson Brook to south east. Openness is significant to separation between Benson and Rokemarsh. Full development would appear prominent and sprawling in the rural landscape setting of the village and AONBs as seen in Views 7 and 8, and would significantly reduce Views at 9. Any development would need to preserve a significant landscape space between Benson and Rokemarsh, and hedge/field boundaries.
2	Green infrastructure	Area in agricultural use (ALC 2) comprising arable crops and semi-improved pasture, with limited biodiversity interest. Hedge on southern boundary of BEN4 and western boundary of BEN3. Scrub area by the Meer provides biodiversity interest on southern boundary (though it is an exception site for housing). Public footpath between the two fields provides access to wider countryside, but connects to Sunnyside green space and play area by a circuitous route. Flood Zone 1.
3	Heritage	Distant from Conservation Area. Minor impact on landscape setting of Hale Farm and listed rural cottages at Rokemarsh. Limited archaeological interest including Early Neolithic pit near S boundary.
4	Core facilities	Distance from school, & library significant although within walking distance; Parish Hall reasonably close and shops and GP surgery are within walking distance. Foot/cycle links poor.
5	Transport	Access from B4009. Likely to increase traffic issues in Castle Square, Oxford Road & Church Road unless new alternative route provided. No dedicated FPs or cycleways offering direct access into village. Site is vital for any future Relief Road and land needs safeguarding. Access to public transport routes an issue. Full Transport Spatial Assessment in Appendix D.
6	Other	No adverse effects from noise of airfield during the day; mitigation needed for night-time effects of aircraft and for effects of road traffic.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
31/Oct/1973	P73/1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
25/May/2017	P17/S1964/O	David Wilson Homes Southern	Land to the north east of Benson to the north of Watlington Road/The Sands (B4009) and east of	Residential development of up to 240 homes, including safeguarding of Edge Rd	Application under consideration

Benson NP Assessment

Development of this site would extend very considerably beyond the existing settlement onto higher ground, and would detract from the rural landscape setting of the village and the AONBs. It would also significantly reduce the important landscape space between the village and Rokemarsh. Any development will be of some landscape harm, but the harm will increase with the degree of spread towards the north and east. The site is some distance from village facilities and connects poorly. However, it would be essential to delivery of the Relief Road in conjunction with sites BEN1, BEN2 and BEN3.

Subject to formal commitment to adhere fully to the Benson Masterplan including delivery of the Relief Road and to mitigate adverse impact in accordance with site-specific policy NPn, BEN4 would be conformant with our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN5: Land to the south of Watlington Road

Site Area: 8.28 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Part of open landscape setting of village as seen in Views 4, 8 and 9 with Brook Street houses at low level to south and low-rise houses to west. Slopes upward towards the Watlington Road. Development, particularly on higher ground, would be prominent in some landscape views, and would detract from the landscape setting of village and both the Chilterns and NWD AONBs.
2	Green infrastructure	Semi-improved pasture (ALC 2) with no known specific biodiversity interest. Hedges on northern and southern boundary. Area of greatest biodiversity interest (abandoned orchard) subject to separate planning permission. Site connects to rest of the village via a public right of way on western boundary, which also provides access to nearest (small) play area at Green Close. Access to wider countryside via footpath to the north towards Rokemarsh through BEN3/4. Flood Zone 1 - relative proximity (within 150m) to Benson Brook means care will be needed to avoid contamination from run-off and worsening problems with groundwater levels in Brook St properties.
3	Heritage	Impact on low, linear historic settlement pattern along Brook Street. Any permission would require further investigation of archaeological evidence including known Bronze Age ditches and Saxon sunken feature buildings.
4	Core facilities	Somewhat distant from Parish Hall, school & library and also from shops and GP surgery but within walking distance, although footpath and cycling links poor. Integration with village difficult.
5	Transport	Access from B4009 but likely to increase traffic issues in Castle Square, Oxford Road & Church Road. No dedicated FPs but limited links possible and cycleways poor. Access to local public transport routes adequate, but strategic route access poor. Likely to add to parking issues in village, near school & near A4074. A fuller spatial assessment is available in Appendix D.
6	Other	Adverse day and night-time effects from noise of road traffic and aircraft. Proximity to training area generates significant noise from hovering aircraft. Some potential for significant adverse night-time effects.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
13/Apr/1961	P61/M0465	Mrs M M Main	The Sands (B4009)	Site for private residences and access - approx 16.5 acres	Refused - extending the boundary of village, conservation of agricultural land
24/Oct/1973	P73/M1089	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with a section of main estate distribution road	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside
29/Oct/1973	P73/M1104	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with access	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside
31/Oct/1973	P73/M1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road - 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
14/Dec/1973	P74/M0008	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with access	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside settlements, traffic safety
17/Feb/1988	P78/W0081/O	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses	Refused - prejudicial to County Defelopment Plan, loss of agricultural land, mains water and sewage inadequate, detrimental development on edge of village, increase turning traffic on highway, inadequate road system in Benson, increased traffic movements in village, inadequate footpath system, contrary to
14/Oct/2016	P16/S3441/O	R J & S Styles	Land south of Watlington Rd	Erection of up to 120 houses	Refused - encroachment into countryside, adverse impact on landscape setting of Benson and nearby Chilterns AONB, development not integrated into village, loss of high quality agricultural land, fails to secure adequate affordable housing, fails to secure adequate

Benson NP Assessment

This site extends the village to the east along the B4009. Development would detract from the landscape setting of the village and the AONBs, particularly where prominent on higher ground, and would integrate poorly with the rest of the village. It would exacerbate traffic problems entering the village on the B4009, while not contributing to the Relief Road or providing any other significant community benefits. Planning approval on this site would provide no benefit to the village, would limit the number of school places available for allocated sites and thereby jeopardise the Benson Masterplan and delivery of the Relief Road.

This site does not conform to the Benson Masterplan or our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is therefore not allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN6: Land to the west of Braze lane

Site Area: 8.14 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Slopes upward towards the Watlington Road. Part of open rural landscape setting of village and of the Chilterns and NWD AONBs as seen in Views 4 and 8. Development would be prominent in these views, particularly where it is on higher ground, and would detract significantly from the landscape setting.
2	Green infrastructure	Semi-improved pasture (ALC 2), with hedges on northern and eastern boundary, and one small area of scrub adjacent to northern hedge. Limited known biodiversity interest on site, but broad roadside verge adjacent proves good nectar sources for insects. No public footpath connections either to village or to wider countryside, and distant from nearest (small) play area at Green Close. Flood Zone 1 - relative proximity (within 150m) to Benson Brook means care will be needed to avoid contamination from run-off and worsening problems with groundwater levels in Brook St properties.
3	Heritage	Distant from Conservation Area. Some effect on wide rural setting of listed buildings at Brookside and Fifield. No assets of local heritage note. Some potential for archaeology given proximity to prehistoric ritual features within airfield and discoveries at BEN5.
4	Core facilities	Remote from Parish Hall, school & library, not within walking distance of any central village facilities. No obvious foot or cycle links
5	Transport	Possible access from B4009 or from BEN5, but access difficult from Braze Lane. Likely to add to traffic & parking issues at all critical junctions since use of car would be essential. No dedicated FPs or cycleways, nor any easy links. Access to local public transport routes adequate, but strategic ones very distant. A full Transport Spatial Assessment available in appendix D
6	Other	Proximity to airfield and runway approach. Adverse day and night-time effects from noise of aircraft and road traffic. Proximity to training area generates significant noise from hovering aircraft. Some potential for significant adverse night-time effects when Chinooks are operating. Mitigation necessary.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
24/Oct/1973	P73/M1089	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with a section of main estate distribution road	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside settlements
29/Oct/1973	P73/M1104	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with access	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside settlements
31/Oct/1973	P73/M1116	George Wimpey Ltd & R J Styles	Oxford Road, Littleworth Road Hale Road, Watlington Road Braze Lane	Erection of houses with main estate distributor road - 64 acres	Refused - premature and prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, prejudicial to Dorchester-Benson-Crowmarsh bypass, inadequate detail, contravenes policy that dwellings should not be outside settlements
14/Dec/1973	P74/M0008	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses with access	Refused - prejudicial to Local Plan, loss of agricultural land, traffic in village centre causing deterioration, increased turning on A423, policy discourages dwellings outside settlements, traffic safety
17/Feb/1988	P78/W0081/O	George Wimpey & Co Ltd	Sands Road (B4009)	Erection of houses	Refused - prejudicial to County Development Plan, loss of agricultural land, mains water and sewage inadequate, detrimental development on edge of village, increase turning traffic on highway, inadequate road system in Benson, increased traffic movements in village, inadequate footpath system, contrary to Benson village map

Benson NP Assessment

The site extends beyond BEN 5 to the east. Development would erode the rural setting of the village and detract significantly from the landscape setting of the AONBs, particularly where prominent on higher ground. The greater distance from the rest of the village and community facilities, together with the poor connectivity, would result in poor integration. Development would exacerbate traffic problems entering the village on the B4009, while not contributing to the Relief Road or providing any other significant community benefits. Planning approval on this site would limit the number of school places available for allocated sites and thereby jeopardise the Benson Masterplan and delivery of the Relief Road.

This site does not conform to the Benson Masterplan or our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is therefore not allocated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN7: Land South of St Helen's Ave & East of Church Road

Site Area: 6.53 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Flat low-lying field. Contained by BEN8 and the airfield, A4074 and hedging, but enjoyed from the public footpath. Valued as a remnant of the agricultural landscape setting separating Benson and Preston Crowmarsh. Risk of settlement coalescence.
2	Green infrastructure	Semi-improved grassland (ALC 2), around half of which is ungrazed and of relatively high biodiversity value (compared with other sites under consideration), offering valuable habitat/nectar sources for countryside spp of butterflies, including NERC Act S41. Priority spp – ADD Hyperlink to butterfly survey data . Mature hedges surrounding site on 3 sides are a biodiversity asset, the hedge on the north-western boundary being one of the most valuable in the village. Good proximity to allotments, play area and Cuckoo Pen/Benson Brook/Millbrook Mead complex, and important public rights of way both through and adjacent to site. Flood Zone 1.
3	Heritage	Separated from the Preston Crowmarsh Conservation Area by the A4074 and hedging, but part of the rural setting as experienced from the footpath. Well preserved archaeological evidence of oval Neolithic enclosure, Iron Age and Roman settlement, and Roman and Saxon burials. Any permission would need to require scheme of further investigation.
4	Core facilities	Shops and GP surgery & library within walking distance, but some distance from school and Parish Hall
5	Transport	Unlikely to get access off A4074, but good access from St Helen's Ave. However, this would put pressure on traffic issues in Church Road, Castle Square and Oxford Road. A radical change to the A4074 junction likely to be needed. Good FP links with village, but new cycle paths needed. Good access to public transport. A full Transport Spatial Assessment in Appendix D
6	Other	Very close to airfield and a significant flightpath – recent appeal recognised significant adverse effects of noise and vibration likely to be significant day and night. Proximity to night time training area generates significant noise from hovering aircraft. Western part of site also subject to significant impact of road traffic noise. Mitigation would impact on living standards. Close to church.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
2/Jul/1964	P64/M0575	Trustees of Mrs G C Thomas	Site 2, St Helen's Rd	Site for 28 houses, 5 acres	Planning permission revoked by ministerial precedent - traffic danger, disastrous effect on character and amenity of Preston Crowmarsh
6/May/1966	P66/M0330	F E Cherrill	Land front St Helen's Ave, 6.5 acres	Residential housing	Refused - extends boundary of Benson, detrimental to rural landscape and amenities, no mains drainage, loss of agricultural land
4/Dec/1986	P86/W0764/O & P86/W0809	F Losel	Land adjacent to A423 (now A4074)	Residential hotel with 100 rooms, services, car parking and landscaping	Went to appeal for non-determination - granted but hotel never built
5/Dec/1994	P94/W0733/O	Westbury Homes	Land south of St Helen's Avenue	Erection of 75 dwellings	Refused and appeal dismissed - damage to Benson's character and setting, breaks clear village boundary, lack of adequate infrastructure and services, incompatible with Local Plan, highway safety
28/Jan/2016	P16/S0314/FUL	Mrs Gillian Callaway, Mr David Smith and Mrs Samantha Earle	Land off St Helen's Ave	Change of use of agricultural land to a pony paddock and the erection of a stable block with associated hard standing,	Permission granted
18/Apr/2016	P16/S1301/O	Gladman Developments Ltd	Land off St Helen's Ave	Up to 130 dwellings with 2 access roads	Refused - appeal pending - for reasons of noise and health impacts on residents
19/Dec/2016	P16/S4223/O	Gladman Developments Ltd	Land off St Helen's Ave	Up to 130 dwellings with 2 access roads	Refused - appeal pending - for reasons of noise and health impacts on residents

Benson NP Assessment

This site provides green separation between Benson and the very different historic settlement of Preston Crowmarsh. The site is not suitable for domestic dwellings as it sits beneath a significant flightpath of RAF Benson and is exposed to severe levels of noise and vibration from both daytime and night-time operations. SODC and Defence Infrastructure Organisation have identified serious environmental health issues with siting houses on the site and these concerns were supported at recent appeal. The western part of the site is also subject to significant adverse impact from traffic. Planning approval on this site would limit the number of school places available for allocated sites and thereby jeopardise the Benson Masterplan and delivery of the Relief Road. Proximity to the church does, however, make this site a suitable location for an overflow burial ground, which is urgently required by the village, as the burial plots in the graveyard opposite the churchyard will be exhausted in a few years.

This site does not conform to the Benson Masterplan or our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is therefore not allocated for domestic housing in this Neighbourhood Plan. A part of BEN7 is allocated for burial ground.

BEN8: Land to the south of St Helen's Ave & adjacent to RAF Benson

Site Area: 5.85 hectares

Current Use: Agricultural: grass

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Flat, low-lying field. Valued as a remnant of the agricultural landscape setting separating Benson and Preston Crowmarsh. Contained by airfield, A4074 and hedging, but enjoyed from the public footpath. Risk of settlement coalescence.
2	Green infrastructure	Grassland provides grazing pasture (Agricultural Land Classification Grade 2 and 3). No significant biodiversity interest apparent on grassland but not surveyed. Adjacent to RAF Benson grasslands, which has botanical and bird interest (with scarce spp) - site may be an important functional linkage to other GI assets. Mature hedge to the north-east and damp scrub to the south-west (adjacent to the valuable A4074 verges) are biodiversity assets. Flood Zone 1. Reasonable proximity to allotments, play area and footpath from a recreational perspective.
3	Heritage	Separated from the Preston Crowmarsh Conservation Area by the A4074 and hedging, but part of the rural setting as experienced from the footpath. No known archaeology, but significant potential given recent discoveries at adjacent BEN7 and evidence for a Prehistoric ritual complex under the airfield.
4	Core facilities	Parish Hall & school are quite distant, but shops, GP surgery and library within walking distance.
5	Transport	Access from A4074 unlikely, but good access from St Helen's Ave. Likely to exacerbate traffic issues on Church Road, Castle Square and Oxford Road. Good foot links with village, but no dedicated cycleways. Some distance from public transport. A full Transport Spatial Assessment is provided in Appendix D.
6	Other	Very close to airfield and significant flightpath – Adverse effect of noise and vibration likely to be significant day and night. Proximity to night time training area generates significant noise from hovering aircraft. Air safety risk. Western part of site also subject to significant impact of road traffic noise. Mitigation would impact on living standards. These issues are similar to those cited by Inspector in recent appeal on BEN7.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
6/May/1966	P66/M0330	F E Cherrill	Land front St Helen's Ave, 6.5 acres	Residential housing	Refused - extends boundary of Benson, detrimental to rural landscape and amenities, no mains drainage, loss of agricultural land

Benson NP Assessment

This site lies to the east of BEN7 and borders the perimeter fence of RAF Benson. The site is not suitable for domestic dwellings as it sits beneath a significant flightpath of RAF Benson and is exposed to severe levels of noise and vibration from both daytime and night-time operations. SODC and Defence Infrastructure Organisation have identified serious environmental health issues with siting houses on BEN7 and the recent appeal on BEN7 was dismissed on these grounds. These issues would apply equally to BEN8. The western part of the site is also subject to significant adverse noise impact from road traffic. Planning approval on this site would limit the number of school places available for allocated sites and thereby jeopardise the Benson Masterplan and delivery of the Relief Road.

This site does not conform to the Benson Masterplan or our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is therefore not allocated in this Benson Neighbourhood Plan.

BEN9: Benson Materials Store - Land to the south of St Helen's Ave

Site Area: 0.41 hectares

Current Use: Originally planned as an OCC Material Store but never used. Leased for several years to Cuckoo Pen Nursery as a car park. Unused for several years.

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Small enclosed plot of no wide landscape value.
2	Green infrastructure	A site of biodiversity value, it supports open scrub mosaic-type habitat (a BAP habitat) with lots of early successional stages represented and large stands of bramble and nettles. Bare ground / open gravel provide valuable invertebrate habitat, and there is a good range of nectar sources for pollinator spp. The site is thus an important supporting part of the village's main green infrastructure asset adjacent to the Millbrook Mead/Cuckoo Pen/Benson Brook complex, which is managed for its nature conservation interest and public access provision. Part of site in Flood Zone 3.
3	Heritage	Not investigated, but high potential for archaeological discovery given proximity to river, church and evidence of Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon settlement at Saxon Court (Rivers Night Club excavations 1999).
4	Core facilities	Parish Hall, school & library within walking distance as are shops and GP surgery.
5	Transport	Access from St Helen's Ave, housing would add to traffic issues in Church Road, Castle Square and Oxford Road. Good foot links with village, public transport accessible. Benson Draft NP identifies this site as possibly dual use, with car parking being one. This site is seen as having potential for future increase in parking in the vicinity of the A4074 – commuters & leisure users especially. If the strategic bus route service is increased then allowance for associated parking must be made.
6	Other	Not formally assessed but likely to suffer from adverse effect of aircraft noise, and significant adverse impact of road traffic on A4074.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
13/Nov/1995	P95/W0661/CC	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways Material Store	Alteration of existing depot - concrete base, loading ramp, crew rest room site entrance improvements	Withdrawn

Benson NP Assessment

This site lies on the south side of St Helen's Avenue. During the consultation phase for the Pre-Submission Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, the owners, OCC, recommended that the site should be considered for housing. However, the site is small, likely to be contaminated, lies almost wholly in Flood Zone and exhibits considerable biodiversity interest. It is directly adjacent to Benson Brook, which is a chalk stream (a BAP habitat) and a key nature conservation asset for the village. EA advice is that the site would not be suitable for housing. It provides informal access to some of Benson's most important green spaces. The site could be very useful as a parking area for those visiting these green spaces and other facilities surrounding St Helen's Avenue. The site is therefore not allocated for domestic dwellings but rather for mixed green space and parking use.

This site does not conform to the Benson Masterplan or our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably and is therefore not allocated for housing in this Neighbourhood Plan. It is however allocated for mixed green space and parking use.

BEN10: Land to the north of The Meer

Site Area: approx. 0.2 hectares

Current Use: Scrubland

Factor		Notes/Comments
1	Landscape character & setting	Small patch of scrub adjoining fields at sites BEN3 and 4 but also associated closely with housing at The Meer and Sands Way. No significant landscape impact if new development were screened by field hedging.
2	Green infrastructure	Small patch of scrub, dominated by bramble and tussocky grass. Biodiversity interest a range of wildlife including songbirds, and provides nectar sources for butterflies and pollinators. Connects to wider countryside via public footpath. Development should be accompanied by proposals for biodiversity enhancements to mitigate loss of scrub habitat.
3	Heritage	Distant from Conservation Area. No listed buildings or known heritage assets. No archaeological investigations as yet.
4	Core facilities	Distance from school, & library not ideal but within walking distance; Parish Hall reasonably close and shops and GP surgery are within walking distance. Foot/cycle links poor.
5	Transport	Access would presumably be from the Meer and thus appears satisfactory. Development would increase traffic issues in Castle Square, Oxford Road & Church Road but the number of properties capable of being supported by the site is small. Access to local bus stops reasonable, but distance to main bus route is considerable.
6	Other	Site is adjacent to SOHA housing and owned by Oxfordshire CC. No adverse daytime noise effect from aircraft. Need to mitigate adverse night-time effects.

Planning History

Date	Appn No	Applicant	Location	Dev Proposed	Decision/Status
16/Jan/2014	P04/E0286	SOHA Housing Ltd	The Meer, Watlington Rd	8 dwellings, access road and parking	Withdrawn

Benson NP Assessment

This site neither contributes to nor detracts from the Benson Masterplan, though it does conform to our preferred spatial strategy for growing the village sustainably. It is not allocated for development in this Neighbourhood Plan, but is kept in reserve for 100% affordable rent / shared ownership housing to meet the needs of the local community if required over the lifetime of this Plan.