

# Cholsey Parish Council



## Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan

# Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

## May 2017

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## Table of Contents:

1. Introduction	4
2. Legal Context and Process	6
3. Task A1 Relevant Plans and Programmes	9
4. Task A2 Establishing a Baseline	12
5. Task A3 Sustainability Challenges	13
6. Task A4 Developing the Sustainability Appraisal Framework	17
7. Next Steps - Sustainability Appraisal in the Neighbourhood Plan Preparation	23
8. Task A5 Consulting on the Scoping Report	26

# 1. Introduction

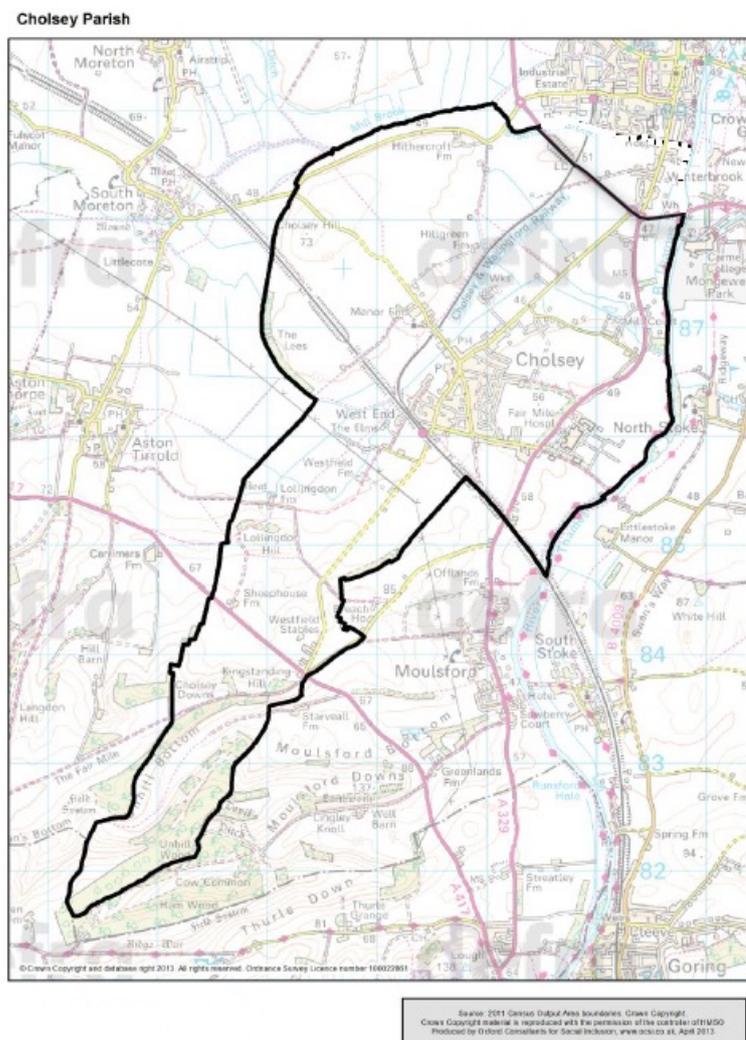
## Purpose

- 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.