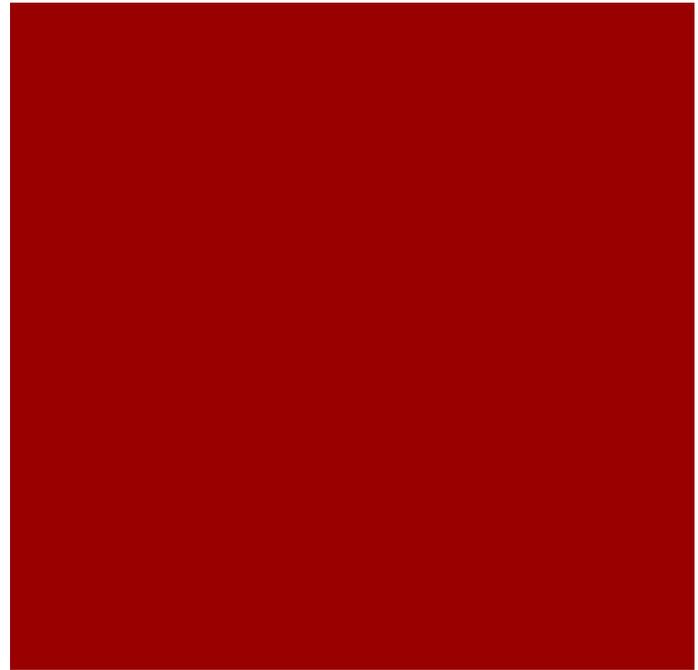




SHERINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



# Sherington Neighbourhood Plan Examination Statement

April 2017

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to support the case of the Parish Council, as qualifying body, in relation to the designation of land east of the High Street, adjacent to Knoll Close [Field S9 in the Site Allocation Assessment, SNP Annex A] as Local Green Space [LGS].
- 1.2 It is understood that the examination will be focused upon Policy NP2, Local Green Space, and only one of the two fields suggested for the designation will be considered.

Two questions have been raised by the Examiner, which are addressed as follows.



## 2. Question 1

Paragraph 77 of the NPPF comments that ‘Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces’. In this context is it appropriate for the parcel of land concerned to be designated as Local Green Space in the submitted Plan?

- 2.1 Surveys and public meetings conducted in 2015, reaffirmed the immense importance the community placed on the historic, open structure of the village.
- 2.2 In the course of regular meetings with MKC it was suggested to us that the desired enhanced protection of the Article 4 land could be achieved by an LGS designation. This would place greater controls over built development, compared to say an extension of the Conservation Area, which covers the adjoining urban area.
- 2.3 The wording of Paragraph 77 of the NPPF was prevalent in our minds when we drew up the Neighbourhood Plan and defined the area of LGS. Originally, this included the current two fields within the designation and land to the north, extending towards the junction of Gun Lane and High Street.
- 2.4 A draft policy designating several green spaces as LGS, including the whole Article 4 area was overwhelmingly supported in the December 2015 consultation survey.
- 2.5 Following comments on the draft NP by Milton Keynes Council in Autumn 2016, (included within the SNP Consultation Statement Page 22), it was recognised

that the proposed designation covered perhaps too large an area. The boundary was reviewed to include those areas of utmost importance to the village.

- 2.6 In that light, the LGS designation was substantially reduced to include only the two fields contained in the submission SNP.
- 2.7 The Parish Council, in seeking to protect this field for future generations, are continuing the work of past Parish Council's and reflect the views of planning officers at Milton Keynes Council.
- 2.8 A very early permission was approved pre-1970, which pre-dated the local plans system of planning we know today. This consent was not implemented and lapsed. Various attempts were then made to develop Field S9, most notably with applications 1970, 1972, 1974 (appeal), 1978, 1979 (called in appeal), and finally in 1981 when an application and appeal were submitted for the last time. Each attempt to seek development of the land was resisted.
- 2.9 Key to these successive refusals was the 1972 Village Appraisal, that identified this part of Sherington as being of '*significant importance to the historic open structure of the village*'. The Village Plan considered the land north of the Knoll and to the East of High Street to be "*inviolable*" and proper recognition and protection should be given to the area adjacent to the Church.
- 2.10 At this time, the village envelope extended past the site, which was amended in the 1982 Village Plan to its current alignment along the rear of the Church Road properties. It also committed the land to be included within the Article 4 Direction that removed permitted development rights. Field S9 was formally designated at that time as an '*area it is important to keep open*'.
- 2.11 This demonstrates a long history of protection from development for Field S9, in the face of repeated attempts by the then landowner to secure housing. It was important to the community then, and remains so today.
- 2.12 The SNP has designated sufficient housing land to meet and exceed the requirement of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy, and there is no need to designate further sites at this stage to be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. Should a need for further housing allocations arise in the future, then this will be addressed by a review to the SNP and consideration of other sites around the village considered to be less historically important to the community than Field S9.



### 3. Question 2

Is the parcel of land demonstrably special to the local community and does it hold a particular local significance?

- 3.1 We have highlighted above the support that the designation of the land as LGS received during the consultation phase of the SNP. This coupled with the protection afforded to Field S9 since the early 1970's in the face of repeated attempts to secure development, demonstrate a long-held view that Field S9 holds local significance.
- 3.2 The text supporting NPPF Paragraph 77 highlights criteria that could identify local significance and being demonstrably special to the local community. These include:

*The beauty of the site*

- 3.3 Field S9 is a small field, that together with the surrounding fields have retained the original field patterns. Many of the fields surrounding Sherington have been 'improved' and are now large expanses of land suited to modern, mechanical farming methods. Field S9 represents the original fields that would have surrounded the village and is an important part of the context of the village. With views of the Church from the well-used footpath, as well as the surrounding countryside, Field S9 is attractive in its setting on the rural edge of the village.

### *Historic significance*

- 3.4 The footpath crossing the site has been used to access the Church and heart of the village for hundreds of years. Those people would recognise the field patterns seen today and the way that Field S9 brings the countryside into the heart of Sherington. It is very important to the historic fabric of the village and has defined the shape of Sherington since the form of the modern village was laid down in the 1300's.

### *Recreational value*

- 3.5 A well-used footpath crosses Field S9 connecting High Street to the Church and the centre of the village, and is in daily use by residents of the village. Field S9 is used extensively for dog walking and recreation, with walkers having unencumbered use of the whole field. This is evidenced by the number of tracks crossing the field and its perimeter.
- 3.6 The LGS designation covers Field S9 and the adjoining field next to the Church. This has also been used extensively for recreation, with various footpaths and wooded areas created by the landowner for the enjoyment of the community. Together, both fields constitute an important recreational resource for the village.

### *Tranquillity*

- 3.7 Field S9 is a small open field, bounded by high overgrown hedgerows. It is by its unspoilt nature the epitome of a "*tranquil*" space. The very fact of its non-development is the key to the tranquillity of Field S9.
- 3.8 Entering this space to follow the public footpath between High Street and Church End is to briefly experience being in unspoilt countryside, yet close to the heart of the village. This is very important to the local community.

### *Richness of its wildlife*

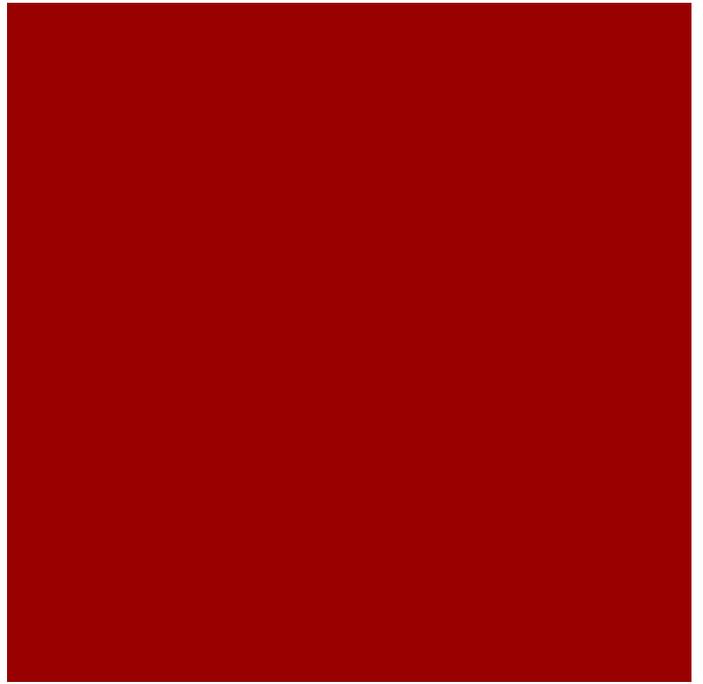
- 3.9 The unkempt state of Field S9 belies its wildlife value.
- 3.10 Field S9 is a rare piece of rough grassland in a landscape dominated by intensive, arable farming. The fact that it has not even been subject to traditional farming as pasture in recent years, (adjacent Article 4 fields to the north are grazed or cropped for hay), makes it particularly rich for wildlife.

- 3.11 Rough grassland of this kind is the perfect habitat for voles, attracting hunters such as Barn Owls and Kestrels. This is the only field so close to the village and represents a priceless habitat for the Barn Owls that bred last year west of the High Street. The surrounding blackthorn hedges are popular with bullfinches (they feed on the buds), and the bramble clumps are perfect nest sites for hedgerow birds.
- 3.12 Field S9 is also rich in invertebrate life with dragonflies quartering the hedges in summer and butterflies over the grassland. The copious anthills provide feeding sites for green woodpeckers. Bats also use the higher hedges as flight routes from their roosts in the Church to feeding grounds.
- 3.13 A wildlife photography competition was held last year with many photographs taken on this land and the adjacent site.



## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Field S9 is an appropriate and suitable location for a LGS designation. There is an extensive and consistent history of protecting the site from development, with successive applications resisted.
- 4.2 The Article 4 Direction was extended to cover the site, removing permitted development rights to bring all forms of development on the land under control. The LGS designation is an appropriate extension of this control, and will protect the openness, historic value, recreational and wildlife value of the site for future generations.



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