



MATTER 1

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND THE DUTY TO CO- OPERATE

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Bidwells LLP have been instructed by Persimmon Homes/Charles Church Midlands (PHM) to provide the Inspector examining the Milton Keynes Local Plan ('Plan:MK', MKSUB001) with a hearing statement in relation his Matter 1, "*legal compliance and the duty to co-operate*" (specifically Inspectors Question Q1.4).

2.0 Sustainability Appraisal

2.1 **Q 1.4 Has the Sustainability Appraisal adequately assessed the likely environmental, social and economic effects of Plan:MK? Does the appraisal demonstrate that the Plan has been tested against all reasonable alternatives? In particular:**

ii) is there adequate coverage of all reasonable alternatives (sites and policies)?

- 2.1.1 PHM do not consider that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) [MK/SUB/005] represents a sound basis on which to base the decisions taken in the Plan:MK, particularly regarding reasonable alternatives. We maintain that the process relating to the SA and assessment of the MK edge sites and subsequent testing of reasonable alternatives is unsound. There is inadequate coverage of the reasonable alternatives set out. Critically, the reasonable alternatives opted for are too focused using variations of the chosen three options. They should have been derived from a proper and full assessment of the 8 screened-in MK Edge sites.
- 2.1.2 A coherent range of reasonable alternatives should have been set out so as to be easily compared and ranked by location and impacts in accordance with the priorities set down in the Strategic Objectives and listed in Appendix III and IV. This should have included all reasonable options from the 8 sites – either in isolation or in combination - tested against the high/low growth scenarios.
- 2.1.3 These shortcomings are highlighted in the Councils March 2018 Housing Land Supply Topic Paper [MK/TOP/002]. Setting aside our concerns on the scale of growth being planned for, at section 9.6 the topic paper suggests that section 6 of the SA '*established the reasonable alternatives*'. It did not.
- 2.1.4 Footnote 5 of the HLS Topic Paper sheds further light on why this process was not carried out, concluding that there were reasonable alternatives to assess but that the task appeared too onerous -text reproduced below for ease:

⁵ Pragmatic considerations led to a need to vary the reasonable alternatives in terms of a relatively narrow range of sites. Specifically, because there was also a need to vary the quantum of growth at each site (see references to 'high' and 'low' in Table 6.6 of the SA Report) any attempt to bring further sites into contention would have led to too many variables, and ultimately too many reasonable alternatives. There is a need to keep the number of reasonable alternatives to a minimum, in order to facilitate manageable and accessible appraisal.

- 2.1.5 At the 2013 Core Strategy stage it was possible for the Council to assess the reasonable alternatives for that chosen strategy through assessment of qualifying sites around the edge of

the urban area. There is no justification as to why at this review stage, some 4-5 years on, the process is now considered impracticable and unachievable. By way of example, Gedling Borough Council has just concluded its Local Plan examination and within its Sustainability Appraisal it assessed 114 reasonable alternatives. The neighbouring Aylesbury Vale District local plan examination has commenced on the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). Within its September 2017 Sustainability Appraisal (also undertaken by AECOM) it managed to assess 5 alternative MK edge options where land is within Aylesbury Vale district in detail for higher and lower growth strategies as only one part of its alternative options along with a similar level of scrutiny in each of its main 7 settlements within Aylesbury Vale district.

2.1.6 We attach an extract from the VALP SA technical appendix showing the weighted scoring for the southern MK Edge (Attachment 1). Over 860 site specific options were assessed in detail for the VALP and the results are documented within it. An example extract showing the level of detail for one of the MK Edge Sites at the western edge (WHA001) is also attached (Attachment 2 and 3) to demonstrate the level of assessment that we would expect to have been undertaken by the Council within Milton Keynes Borough. It is not unreasonable or onerous to expect the Council to undertake a similar exercise for those parts of the MK Edge that fall within its administrative area as has occurred for the neighbouring VALP.

2.1.7 The Council acknowledges there are further reasonable alternatives but it has not assessed them and is therefore directly in breach of the SA requirements – to assess **all** reasonable alternatives.

2.1.8 The Council are required to produce a Sustainability Appraisal that confirms to the SEA Regulations. This requires action.

iii) Are reasons for rejecting alternatives and discounting unreasonable options clearly given?

2.1.9 The SA is not user friendly, evidenced by the need for a further explanation by the Council in its response to the Inspectors questions [INS1a-d] on where to find the various threads that should combine to make up the assessment which is still, in our view, unsatisfactory. It is a requirement of the SEA regulations that this comparative assessment is undertaken and clearly documented.

2.1.10 It cannot be the case that the Plan:MK is being examined and yet PHM has no ability to see how its site scored relative to other MK edge sites including the two sites selected for further testing of reasonable alternatives. Accordingly, it is not clear to see how those that were disqualified performed against the chosen variables applied and ranked at that stage. Groupings of sites were not considered, or the subdivision of sites that would otherwise meet the stated criterion of scale.

2.1.1 In the absence of a weighted assessment of the MK Edge sites, it does not produce a mechanism for comparing alternatives in a quantifiable manner before reaching and setting the reasonable alternatives to be assessed. The color-coded matrix method of assessment has the potential to produce total scores for comparative purposes but this step was not taken at the appropriate stage. As a result, factors have not been assessed consistently between sites.

- 2.1.2 As referenced in the Reg 19 representations and referred to above, the Council is familiar with this method from its previous work on the 2013 Core Strategy and so is aware of its benefits in determining the comparative performance of sites. With the benefit of this approach, it would then be possible to show clear reasons for discounting unreasonable options and enable a transparent process for identifying and testing reasonable alternatives.
- 2.1.3 Instead, the Council opted to apply this level of scrutiny once it has determined the sites that it wanted to assess and only applied it to various scenarios relating to those specific options. This is too far into the process. Even at this stage of assessing reasonable alternatives, the document is not clear. We note the Inspector has requested further work in this respect [INSa-2] which should be available to assist the hearing session on this point.
- 2.1.4 We maintain that there is no clear reason for discounting unreasonable options and that some or all of these sites should have been assessed as reasonable alternatives for the high/low growth scenario assessment that were subsequently tested to derive a preferred strategy.
- 2.1.5 A particular sites' assessment should be readily discernible. The Council's response [Ins1a] to the Inspectors initial questions is not satisfactory. The '*detailed consideration of the short-list of sites screened-in*' is not included within section 6 of the SA as suggested. Following on, the SA [MK/SUB/005] did not enable the identification of reasonable spatial strategy alternatives for appraisal and consultation, as purported at page 5 of Ins1a. Instead it only appraised alternative strategies of the two sites taken forward. The SA also states at para 6.5.6 of page 33 that other [MK Edge] sites were ruled-out of contention in light of the analysis of site options discussed in table 6.4. There is no transparency within Table 6.4 or Appendix III to enable this conclusion to be reached. As the formation of the spatial strategy is not evidenced, the assessment of reasonable alternatives from section 6.5 to the end of the Part 1 SA is not justified.
- 2.1.1 PHM has already commented on the incorrect assessment of Shenley Dens to highlight this point. The Council has paid no regard to detailed technical assessments that were submitted at the Reg 18 stage including heritage, landscape and transport studies along with a phased masterplan showing the nature of development that could be achieved. Fundamentally, on the issue of housing delivery, a key issue for the Council, 7 of the 8 screened-in sites - with the sole exception of Shenley Dens - were concluded to have major constraints to delivery within the plan period.
- 2.1.2 The table 6.4 summary does not clearly show how SEMK and East M1 (North) performed sufficiently well to be taken forward. For example, the first point of Table B suggests the test against creating vibrant communities would support the three larger schemes – i.e. not including SEMK. Under education, 5 sites were discounted as not being able to support a new secondary school, including SEMK. Of note, neither site specific policy SD12 SEMK or SD13 East M1 included a requirement for secondary education until the recent proposed modifications (PM36 and PM38 of MK/SUB/004).
- 2.1.3 Many of the assessment criteria for issues/sites is stated as 'unclear', 'uncertain' or 'not included' within certain studies that have been relied upon. This is not robust.

- 2.1.4 It will become clear that the South-East MK is unlikely to be capable of operating as a single joint allocation when tested at examination for Matter 5. Despite all the assessment being considered as a strategic site of 3,000 units, the reality on the ground having regards to matters such as land ownership, the main east-west rail line, the potential impact of the Expressway only on the southern section and a reasonable judgement of how the new community will function – i.e. as two separate and distinct communities. Timing is critical as the current SA was produced before the proposed modifications. The allocation was in two distinct parts- the northern section looked towards Wavendon Gate and the H10 Bletcham Way. The southern section looked towards Bow Brickhill and the Woburn Sands. This is more evident in the representations made by the respective landowners. They are completely capable of functioning as two separate communities. The selection criteria for a site for 3,000 homes does not take proper account of the severance caused by the rail line.
- 2.1.5 To make the Plan sound, the SA should be revisited, specifically Part 1 and the detailed assessment drawn together in a coordinated way and made available for review. This needs to occur before any specific discussion can be held on the reasonable alternatives. The relative merits of one approach over another is not the issue here, it is the fact that there is no transparency for the conclusions drawn, particularly to justify the step between Part 1: Section 6 to section 7.
- 2.1.6 This may (or may not) affect the spatial strategy and proposed allocations but without this required stage it is not possible to conclude that the plan is sound.
- iv) Is the SA proportionate and relevant in contributing to the evidence base of Plan:MK (NPPF paragraph 167).**
- 2.1.7 Those sites listed within section 6 of the SA should have had a weighted assessment, from which the site selection would have occurred. This could have included the identified sites at East M1 and SEMK plus any other derivative of them, similar to the actual assessment undertaken.
- 2.1.8 This applies equally to the identified site (at South east MK) and to the future reserve site (M1 east). Both exercises should have been undertaken separately for transparently. There is no inter-relationship between the two options that are being taken forward. Hence the SA could have, and should have, looked first at the options for meeting the identified OAN1 and separately, gone on to consider the option for any future growth beyond the plan period. The high-level approach to the SA in this regard has not proportionate to the scale of growth being put forward in allocations and the future reserve site.
- 2.1.9 As the assessment of reasonable alternatives is incorrectly applied at the wrong stage in site sifting it is not clear to see how any alternatives would have performed. Had that been

¹ Our detailed comments on the OAN are set out in PHM Reg 19 representations and hearing statement for Matter 3.

undertaken at the earlier stage, it would have produced a more reliable and evidenced SA. Without this detail it is not possible to establish whether the outcome may have been materially different.

- 2.1.10 PHM has previously set out the need for the MK edge sites to have been subject to the same rigour as the two options taken forward. A good example of this is at Shenley Dens where there is no complete assessment of the site against the 18 SA objectives and a reliance upon old data which is not before the Inspector such as the previous 2005 local plan work. We reference the associated Reg 19 reps for the detail on this. Detailed assessments of the Site relating to landscape, green infrastructure, heritage, transport, flood risk/drainage and ecology matters have been submitted to the Council at the various stages of its preparation. There is no indication within the SA or other documents that any of these documents have been reviewed or considered.
- 2.1.11 The SA approach was not sensitive enough to produce accurate conclusions on individual sites or to assess how each performed comparatively to one another. The analysis uses out of date and unsubstantiated informal assessments to form subjective judgements on key elements such as landscape impacts, visual value and perceptual aspects which may only apply to a specific part of an assessed area, with no ability to breakdown the character areas into smaller segments to offer a comparison.
- 2.1.12 Table 6.2 of the SA sets out the available MK Edge sites arising from the earlier work. The shortlist of 8 'screened-in' sites were analysed and reported on. The document states that these were examined 'following informal analysis in isolation' with summaries at Table 6.4. Appendix III includes some more detail but expressly states that it is a narrative and "*The aim is not to systematically discuss each of the 8 site options in terms of each of the 18 SA topics/objectives*".
- 2.1.13 It is this 'examination' that is not clearly documented or available for review by participants. Table 6.4 is not sufficiently robust. The Council's response to the Inspectors initial questions at p3 of INS1a is not acceptable. For example, the Council's response to the Inspectors questions clearly states that the site options in table 6.4 of the SA are not intended as reasonable alternatives. We do not understand the response "given that the objective of Plan:MK is to allocate a package of sites, rather than just one site, the sites listed in table 6.4 are not mutually exclusive and hence are not alternatives" – i.e. the 8 screened in MK Edge sites. We wish to participate in the Matter 1 hearing session to discuss this further.
- 2.1.14 The PHM response to Matter 3 is relevant. However even without that, the fact that some site options were ruled out on the basis that they may supply a lower or higher growth quantum than the OAN and the reasonable alternatives then went on to test impacts at "OAN plus" levels goes to the heart of the issues PHM has with the SA. The Council acknowledges that in hindsight, options including for greater than OAN plus 15% might have been appraised. Again, this response is unsatisfactory.
- 2.1.15 Under 'Alternative plan periods' the Council now contradicts itself by responding to the questions. It confirms no alternative plan periods were examined as part of the SA yet it concludes on East M1 as being a reserve site that is suitable for delivery beyond the plan period. It goes on to state that it did take into account the emerging strategic growth context when establishing the

reasonable alternatives and completing the SA. None of this is transparent within the SA to enable the reader to understand the process and conclusions reached.

- 2.1.16 Under 'Conclusion' the Council still purports that "the spatial strategy alternatives defined for Plan:MK, namely the various scenarios of the two housing allocations opted for and not any wider site options in alternative locations are not as distinct and engaging as [we] might ideally like to be the case, but they did nonetheless facilitate a useful appraisal". We do not agree that the site options appraised meet the regulatory requirement under Schedule 2(8) to provide an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The fact that the Council are seeking to rely upon pressure relating to available time and resources and available evidence is not a satisfactory response. Even where detailed evidence was provided by PHM in its submissions to the earlier non-statutory stages of Plan:MK for Shenley Dens, there is no reference to such documents or detailed technical assessments having been reviewed or taken into account in any way.
- 2.1.17 The Council's response to the emerging strategic growth strategy simply highlights the poor decision-making to progress (rush) the Plan:MK through the system. The current SA is neither proportionate nor relevant to the evidence base.
- 2.1.18 Without this process having been properly undertaken, should the situation arise that additional allocations are required to meet a different OAN target once examined under Matter 3, the SA would not be capable of being robust for determining other land for development in Plan:MK and would need a considerable amount of extra work to determine this. This alone is a good benchmark in establishing whether or not it is fit for purpose now.
- 2.1.19 In summary, the SA is flawed which renders the Plan:MK unsound. The SA should undertake a full and proper assessment of any edge sites that meet the qualifying criterion once that criterion itself has been properly produced.

MILTON KEYNES EDGE

Introduction

This proforma aims to present information on alternative approaches that might be taken to the allocation of land for housing at the Milton Keynes edge, through the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). Systematic and timely consideration of alternatives of alternatives is necessary for soundness¹⁰ and also a requirement of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process.¹¹

Specifically, this proforma –

- 1) Introduces the **opportunities and constraints** to growth at Milton Keynes edge
- 2) Lists the **sites** that are available to deliver growth, i.e. the options ‘in the running’ for allocation
- 3) Discusses **potential alternative approaches to site allocation** at Milton Keynes edge
- 4) Considers ‘**reasonable alternatives**’ necessitating formal appraisal
- 5) Draws **conclusions**.

Opportunities and constraints

The northern part of Aylesbury Vale District directly adjoins Milton Keynes (MK), a former new town and growing regional centre. As such, there is a need to consider the potential for the allocation of land for housing and/or employment, to contribute to both Aylesbury Vale and MK specific objectives. Evidence is available to show the strong linkages between the District and MK, with the MK functional Housing Market Area (HMA) stretching across the north of the District, and many residents within the District commuting into MK for work and travelling in to access retail and other facilities, principally via the A421.

Rail links between the District and MK are poor, with only Cheddington on the eastern edge of the District on the MK (to Euston) train line; however, rail links will improve as a result of East West Rail, which will involve the creation of a spur between MK and Aylesbury (via Aylesbury Vale Parkway and a new station at Winslow) early in the plan period. There is already an Aylesbury to MK express bus service.

There is also a need to recognise the longer term opportunity associated with the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. Two of the three high level route options currently being explored would involve a route west from Junction 13 of the M1 across south Milton Keynes, or along the southern edge of Milton Keynes (with the third route option being a southern route from J13, via Leighton Buzzard and then Aylesbury). The selection of one of the two northern route options, and the selection of the precise route through/along southern MK, could have considerable spatial strategy implications, in respect of housing and employment growth. However, selection of a preferred route is not anticipated for some time.

There is already some cross-boundary development occurring, and more planned. Specifically, one large site is under construction (SHM012, 350 homes at MK’s southern tip) and a significantly larger site recently gained a ‘resolution to permit subject to Section 106 agreements’ (NLV001, 1,855 homes at Salden Chase). The Salden Chase scheme will include a secondary school and a small employment area.

With regards to constraints, there is a particular need to consider -

- sensitivities associated with Newton Longville (a Medium Village) and Whaddon (a Smaller Village, with a designated conservation area);
- potential traffic impacts in the strategic A421 transport corridor, on Milton Keynes itself and on villages near to potential development sites;
- landscape sensitivities associated with proposed locally designated landscapes (Areas of Attractive Landscape, AALs) to the west (including Whaddon) and east (north of Stoke Hammond and Great Brickhill); and
- biodiversity sensitivities recognising that ‘Whaddon Chase’ (to the west) and the River Ouzel valley (to the east) are County-level Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs).

Figure A depicts a range of readily map-able constraints.

Site options

The HELAA Report (January 2017) reports the outcome of the HELAA process. For each of the 17 HELAA sites on the MK edge, it concludes on -

- Suitability for housing - 4 sites are found to be suitable, or part suitable
- Suitability for employment - 1 sites are found to be suitable, or part suitable.

In terms of identifying sites that should feature within (i.e. 'form the building blocks for') spatial strategy alternatives, there is a clear need to focus primarily on sites deemed 'suitable' or 'part suitable' through the HELAA. However, 'unsuitable' HELAA sites should not necessarily be ruled-out entirely. This is on the basis that the HELAA is by its nature not the last-word in plan-making. The HELAA involves looking at sites in isolation (i.e. one by one), with no consideration given to the strategic context, e.g. in combination effects of developing more than one, or numerous sites. There is the potential for strategic factors to result in an 'unsuitable' HELAA site ultimately being deemed suitable for allocation.

Figure B shows: A) Commitments; B) Sites deemed 'suitable' or 'part suitable' for housing through the HELAA; and C) Sites deemed 'unsuitable' for housing through the HELAA. In addition, Figure B builds-upon the HELAA by in respect of 'part suitable', where possible. See further explanation, below.

Potential alternatives

Recognising the recent 'resolution to grant planning permission' at Salden Chase on the southern edge of MK (NLV001, 1,855 homes), a reasonable '**do minimum**' approach to allocations at the MK edge would involve nil allocations (over-and-above NLV001, which must be allocated, as the 'resolution to grant' was subsequent to the Local Plan cut-off date of 31st March 2017), despite the fact that this approach would serve to increase pressure for development at other settlements, including smaller settlements.

There is also a need to consider **higher growth** options, which would involve additional allocation of –

- GRB002 (1,200 homes) - HELAA *unsuitable*, but would involve completing the 1,800 home 'Land at Eaton Leys' cross-boundary site, i.e. the 1,200 homes would be in addition to the 600 homes already permitted on land directly to the north, within MK borough.
- WHA001 (up to 2,000 homes) to the west - HELAA *suitable*; however, sensitive from a heritage/landscape perspective, including as it forms a landscape gap between MK and Whaddon; and/or
- MUR001, MUR002 and NLV020 (up to 3,000 homes) - HELAA *unsuitable*, but together would extend the recently permitted 1,855 home 'Salden Chase' scheme. All of these sites were supported within the South East Plan (now revoked) as the North East Aylesbury Vale Strategic Development Area.

There are also a number of other HELAA unsuitable sites in the vicinity of Newton Longville; however, opportunities for strategic scale expansion are less apparent here, and all of the sites are notably constrained, with a key issue being the need to maintain a landscape gap between Newton Longville and the MK edge. These sites are sequentially less preferable to the sites discussed above.

Focusing on (A), (B) and (C), in addition to the possibility of allocating one of these sites, there is also the question of whether more than one site could be allocated. On balance, it is suggested that the only feasible 'combination' higher growth option would involve the two smaller sites - (A) and (B) - as any other combination would result in over-development, with likely negative sustainability implications and also deliverability risks.

Reasonable alternatives

On the basis of the above discussion, it is possible to establish five reasonable alternatives -

- 1) Do minimum = allocations for **1,855 homes**
- 2) Additional allocation of GRB002 for 1,200 homes = **2,055 homes**
- 3) Additional allocation of WHA001 for 2,000 homes = **3,855 homes**
- 4) Additional allocation of MUR001, MUR002 and NLV020 for 3,000 homes = **4,855 homes**
- 5) Additional allocation of GRB002 and WHA001 for 3,200 homes = **5,055 homes**

The table below presents a discussion of the relative performance of the alternatives in respect of the 12 sustainability topics that comprise the established 'SA framework'. The alternatives are placed in order of preference, or '=' is used to indicate that the alternatives perform broadly on a par.

Topic	Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4	Opt 5	Discussion
Biodiversity	1	1	2	2	2	<p>The Whaddon and Salden Chase sites to the southwest and south are notably sensitive, given that they sit within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), with Thrift Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) adjacent and other woodland LWSs nearby. The Bucks Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013) identifies the potential benefits that might arise from quite extensive woodland creation within this area, which it refers to as Whaddon Chase. In particular, the potential for a large area of habitat creation within the Whaddon site (Options 3 and 5) is identified. Development could potentially facilitate targeted habitat creation, such that there is landscape-scale 'biodiversity gain'; however, this is uncertain. Perhaps more likely is that significant development would be contrary to BOA / Bucks GI Strategy objectives.</p> <p>The final site at Eaton Leys to the east is perhaps less sensitive, although the boundary of the site is defined by the Grand Union Canal / River Ouzel floodplain, which is a BOA, and Waterhall Park LWS is adjacent. More generally, the site is within the Brickhills Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), which is associated with: <i>"Rich natural character influenced by the large number of linked features including heathland, woodland, grassland and wetland."</i>¹⁶ As discussed, land adjacent to the north within MK (which similarly borders the canal) recently gained planning permission, with policy for the site published within Draft Plan MK (March 2017), to reflect the planning permission. The Draft Plan MK policy does not reference the need to account for any particular biodiversity issues/opportunities.</p>
Climate change adaptation	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Flood risk is not a major constraint to development at the MK edge. The Salden Chase and Eaton Leys sites intersect a flood risk zone; however, there would be good potential to leave land within the flood zone undeveloped, i.e. use this land for green infrastructure.</p>

¹⁶ Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District. LUC, March 2016. See https://www.aylesburyvale.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/Aylesbury%20Vale%20Local%20Landscape%20Designations%20FINAL%20REPORT%2027%2004%2016.pdf

Climate change mitigation	2	2	2	1	2	<p>Applying broad rules of thumb, the scale of all sites indicates that there could be potential to achieve the economies of scale necessary to deliver low carbon infrastructure, e.g. a combined heat and power station, associated with a district heating network.</p> <p>However, in practice there may be limited opportunity. Neither of the recent major planning permissions granted at the MK edge require low carbon infrastructure, reflecting viability considerations, i.e. the need to divert funds to other infrastructure, high quality design and affordable housing.</p> <p>A Salden Chase scheme (Option 4) would be notably larger, and hence there may be good potential at this site. It might also feasibly be masterplanned in coordination with the adjacent 1,855 home scheme that recently gained a 'resolution to grant planning permission'; however, in practice this may be unlikely.</p>
Community	=	=	=	=	=	<p>All sites would likely deliver a range of community infrastructure; and have reasonable ease of access to higher order facilities. All sites are a long distance from Central Milton Keynes (6km+), but the Whaddon and Eaton Leys sites are both close to a district centre (Westcroft and Bletchley, respectively). All sites would have good access to high quality countryside, in the form of Whaddon Chase or the Grand Union Canal / River Ouzel.</p> <p>Focusing on the large Salden Chase scheme (Option 4), the site would be somewhat isolated; however, given the scale of this scheme, there would undoubtedly be the potential to deliver a new local centre, and targeted community facilities in coordination with the adjacent 'resolution to grant' Salden Chase scheme (e.g. a large scheme proposed in past included land for a Park and Ride). However, on the other hand, it is noted that the possibility of a large scheme at Salden Chase has been considered in the past, over many years, and been found to have drawbacks, hence the recent focus on a more modest (1,855 home) scheme.</p> <p>In general, it is not clear that there are any particular community infrastructure opportunities to be realised through development at any of these sites, or development of sites in combination.</p> <p>Finally, with regards to negative implications for existing local residents, potentially the greatest concern relates to impacts to residents at Whaddon and Newton Longville. Traffic is often a concern to existing residents; however, this tends to be less so the case in Milton Keynes than elsewhere, recognising that there tends to be relatively good capacity on road infrastructure. All sites would have good access to a major road (either the A421 or A5); however, rat-running through villages could still be a concern, notably through Whaddon and Newton Longville.</p>

Economy	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Need/demand for employment land in Aylesbury Vale, as established through the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), is broadly in balance with existing supply, which indicates little need to allocate new land for employment. However, it is worthwhile giving consideration to the potential to deliver new employment land nonetheless, recognising that employment growth forecasts are inherently uncertain.</p> <p>There is also a need to bear in mind that Aylesbury Vale HEDNA conclusions apply less to sites on the MK edge; however, a recent (June 2017) MK Economic Growth and Employment Land Study Partial Update concluded that: <i>"In quantitative terms, there is sufficient supply in Milton Keynes to meet forecasted demand."</i> N.B. in qualitative terms the study recorded uncertainty.¹⁷</p> <p>All sites could feasibly deliver employment land, recognising that they abut a main road (with the potential for major upgrades at part of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway); however, there is no certainty in this respect. The recently permitted Salden Chase scheme will deliver only a small employment area (precise size yet to be determined), whilst the recently permitted Eaton Leys scheme, within MK Borough, will not deliver any employment land. At Salden Chase (Option 4) the size of the site might suggest good potential to deliver employment land; however, the presence of a woodland would likely prevent employment land from being located adjacent to the main road (A421).</p>
Heritage	1	2	3	2	4	<p>The Whaddon site (Options 3 and 5) performs poorly on the basis that it would reduce the landscape gap between the edge of MK and the Whaddon Conservation Area (CA), and indeed abut the CA. It also falls within the Whaddon Chase landscape area, as defined by the Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy, and described as: <i>"A very ancient relict landscape with a special local character due to the preservation of the former hunting chase landscape."</i>¹⁸</p> <p>However, it is noted that the site falls outside of the Whaddon Nash Valley Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL).</p> <p>The Salden Chase site is unconstrained by designated features; however, as per the Whaddon site discussed above, it falls within the Whaddon Chase landscape area (but outside of the Whaddon Nash Valley AAL)</p> <p>The Eaton Leys site is in close proximity to a cluster of listed buildings associated with Water Eaton, including Mill Farm, which is almost adjacent, and a listed canal bridge. The site falls within the Brickhills AAL, the heritage value of which was confirmed by a recent study, which references: <i>"Historic landscape character of the canal and river corridor including historic flood meadows, bridges and locks, and the sense of enclosure and intimacy created by lush vegetation."</i>¹⁶</p> <p>It is fair to conclude that, from a heritage perspective, there is merit in leaving sites undeveloped. It is also fair to conclude that the Whaddon site is the most constrained.</p>

¹⁷ See <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/employment-evidence-base?chapter=2>

¹⁸ See https://www.aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/Green-Infrastructure-Flagship-Projects.pdf

Housing	=	=	=	=	=	<p>The MK edge falls within the Milton Keynes functional housing market area, across which there is confidence regarding the potential to accommodate objectively housing assessed need (OAHN). In comparison, the south of the District falls within the Buckinghamshire functional housing market area, where accommodating OAHN is a major challenge, i.e. there is a risk of unmet needs. As such, it is difficult to conclude that higher growth options are necessarily preferred, from a 'housing' perspective.</p> <p>It is also the case that deliverability could be called into question under Option 5, i.e. it might transpire that the Council sets itself a target / establishes a housing trajectory that it cannot achieve, potentially with implications for the Council's ability to maintain a rolling 'five year housing land supply'. Similarly, it could be the case that there are deliverability risks associated with a large scheme at Salden Chase, including on the basis of potentially having to be delivered after the adjacent permitted site (1,885 homes); however, this is uncertain.</p>
Landscape	★1	2	2	2	3	<p>With regards to the Eaton Leys site, the Aylesbury Landscape Study (2017) concludes: <i>"The sites elevated nature exposes it to views from elevated hills... Two PROW's intersect the site with views across the open rural landscape. The site lies within an area of proposed Designated Local Landscape and is of high landscape quality and value with wide panoramic views of the wider rural countryside. The site has no elements that would contribute to an urban fringe character... [However]... 70% of the site developable due to the reduction in susceptibility that development to the north would have on the site."</i></p> <p>With regards to the Whaddon site, the Aylesbury Landscape Study (2017) concludes: <i>"Potential to develop 35% of the site as residential development, to the north of Shenley Rd, east of Bottle House Farm and against the eastern edge of Milton Keynes. Existing blocks of woodland... could be extended to enclose development... Topography of remaining site exposes it to surrounding landscape making it less suitable to develop."</i></p> <p>With regards to the Salden Chase site, the Landscape Study (2017) concludes that the southern half of the site is unsuitable <i>"due to extent of exposure and isolation from settlement, which would be difficult to mitigate."</i></p> <p>In conclusion, as per the discussion under 'heritage', given the extent of development proposed/planned in the MK environs, it is fair to conclude that from a landscape perspective there is merit in leaving these sites undeveloped. It is difficult to differentiate between the sites, in terms of their relative landscape sensitivity. The Eaton Lees site falls within the Brickhills Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), and a recent study has served to confirm the value of this AAL,¹⁶ but the sensitivity of the site will be reduced once adjacent land in MK is developed.</p>

Natural resources	1	2	1	1	2	<p>A key consideration here is the need to protect agricultural land, and in particular land that is grade 1, 2 or 3a, which is defined as 'best and most versatile' (BMV) by the NPPF.</p> <p>All three sites have mostly been surveyed, using the 'post 1988 criteria', with results showing the Eaton Leys site to be notably constrained, comprising mostly grade 3a land (along with some grade 3b). In comparison, the other two sites comprise mostly grade 3b land.</p> <p>N.B. the permitted site adjacent to Eaton Leys (600 homes) comprises mostly grade 2 agricultural land, which serves to highlight that loss of BMV agricultural land is not necessarily a barrier to development.</p>
Pollution	=	=	=	=	=	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) designated in Milton Keynes, and hence air quality is not thought likely to be an issue, when differentiating the alternatives.</p> <p>With regards to Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) capacity, the Aylesbury Vale Water Cycle Study (WCS, 2017) examines capacity at the Cotton Valley WwTW on the eastern edge of MK, which serves the majority of MK, as far west as Whaddon. The study does not highlight any concerns; however, it is noted that Anglian Water stated through the Draft VALP consultation (2017) that -</p> <p><i>"Anglian Water has made an assessment of the available capacity at Water Recycling Centres (formerly known as sewage treatment works) for each of the proposed housing allocation sites within our area of responsibility. It is important to note that this assessment does not take account of the cumulative impact of development on the identified Water Recycling Centres. This is particularly relevant to Buckingham Water Recycling Centre which serves a number of parishes within the district and Cotton Valley Water Recycling Centre which serves the Milton Keynes area."</i> [emphasis added].</p>
Travel / transport	2	1	3	3	3	<p>Proximity to services/facilities has already been discussed above, under the 'Communities' heading. There is also a need to consider the matter of proximity to employment locations, and in this respect the Eaton Leys site potentially performs marginally best, as it is closer to the eastern side of Milton Keynes, where employment land is focused. The Eaton Leys site also benefits from being within walking distance of Bletchley Train station, which will be a stop on East West Rail. Furthermore, development here would potentially result in a lower proportion of trips along the A421 between MK and Buckingham, which is known to be a traffic congestion hotspot (albeit it may see upgrades as part of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway).</p> <p>On balance, it is suggested that allocation of the Eaton Leys site is preferable to the 'do minimum', from a transport perspective; however, this conclusion is somewhat uncertain.</p>
Waste	=	=	=	=	=	<p>All alternatives could support sustainable waste management.</p>

Conclusions

Option 1 ('do minimum', i.e. support only the 1,885 home Salden Chase scheme which has a resolution to grant planning permission) performs best in terms of the greatest number of objectives. There is a suggestion that it might result in something of an opportunity missed in respect of 'Climate change' and 'Transport' objectives; however, neither conclusion is reached with a high degree of certainty.

Another notable conclusion is that that Option 5 (highest growth) performs poorly, with concerns raised in respect of the majority of environmental objectives. Whilst it will not always be the case that a high growth option at a given settlement performs poorly from an environmental perspective, recognising that the effect may be to reduce pressure on more sensitive locations, at the MK edge there are some clear sensitivities, heightened by the scale of recent and planned growth.

Of the three strategic sites under consideration for allocation (in addition to the 1,885 home Salden Chase scheme), the appraisal potentially serves to suggest that it is the site at Whaddon (Options 3 and 5) that performs least well; however, this is not a clear cut conclusion. Another argument might be that the Eaton Leys site (Options 2 and 5) performs least well on the basis that it comprises mostly BMV agricultural land, or that the Salden Chase site (Option 4) performs least well on the basis of deliverability risks.

Option 1	★1	=	2	=	=	★1	=	★1	★1	=	2	=
Option 2	★1	=	2	=	=	2	=	2	2	=	★1	=
Option 3	2	=	2	=	=	3	=	2	★1	=	3	=
Option 4	2	=	★1	=	=	2	=	2	★1	=	3	=
Option 5	2	=	2	=	=	4	=	3	2	=	3	=

In response to the appraisal, the Council's view is that -

"Whilst the Council broadly agrees with SA findings, it places a higher degree of weight on the landscape constraint affecting the Eaton Leys site, recognising that the site falls within the Brickhills AAL, the value of which has been confirmed by a recent Study (Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District, LUC 2016) and recognising that the adjacent land within MK Borough will not be built-out for a number of years. Having accounted for this greater weight, the Council finds the Eaton Leys site to perform notably worse than the other two sites. On this basis, Options 1, 3, and 4 should be taken forward for further consideration, as an element of district-wide spatial strategy alternatives."

Note on maps

Figure A (Constraints) is self-evident, although one point to note is that there are some additional constraints not shown on the map, including: several locally designated 'Biological Notification Sites' and numerous areas identified as an 'Archaeological Notification Area'.

Figure B (Commitments and site options) should be understood as a map that seeks to 'take forward' the maps presented within the HELAA (January 2017) in three ways -

- 1) Sites that are now a commitment are shown as such.
- 2) Where work has been undertaken to define suitable areas of land within sites defined by the HELAA as 'part suitable', then the suitable area of land is shown as suitable and the remainder as unsuitable.
- 3) Where land within sites defined by the HELAA as 'part suitable' is now a commitment, then that part of the site is shown as being a commitment, and the remainder as unsuitable.

LEGEND

- Listed Building Outside of Conservation Area
 Ancient Woodland
 Aylesbury District Boundary
 Conservation Area
 Flood Zone 2
 Flood Zone 3
 Local Wildlife Site
 Proposed Designated Local Landscape
 Registered Park or Garden
 Scheduled Monument
 Site of Special Scientific Interest

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Client _____

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Project Title

SA OF THE VALE OF AYLESBURY

LOCAL PLAN

Drawing Title:

MILITANT KEYNES PROCE

MILTON KEYNES EDGE CONSTRAINTS

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
TD	BB	M/E	06/09/2017

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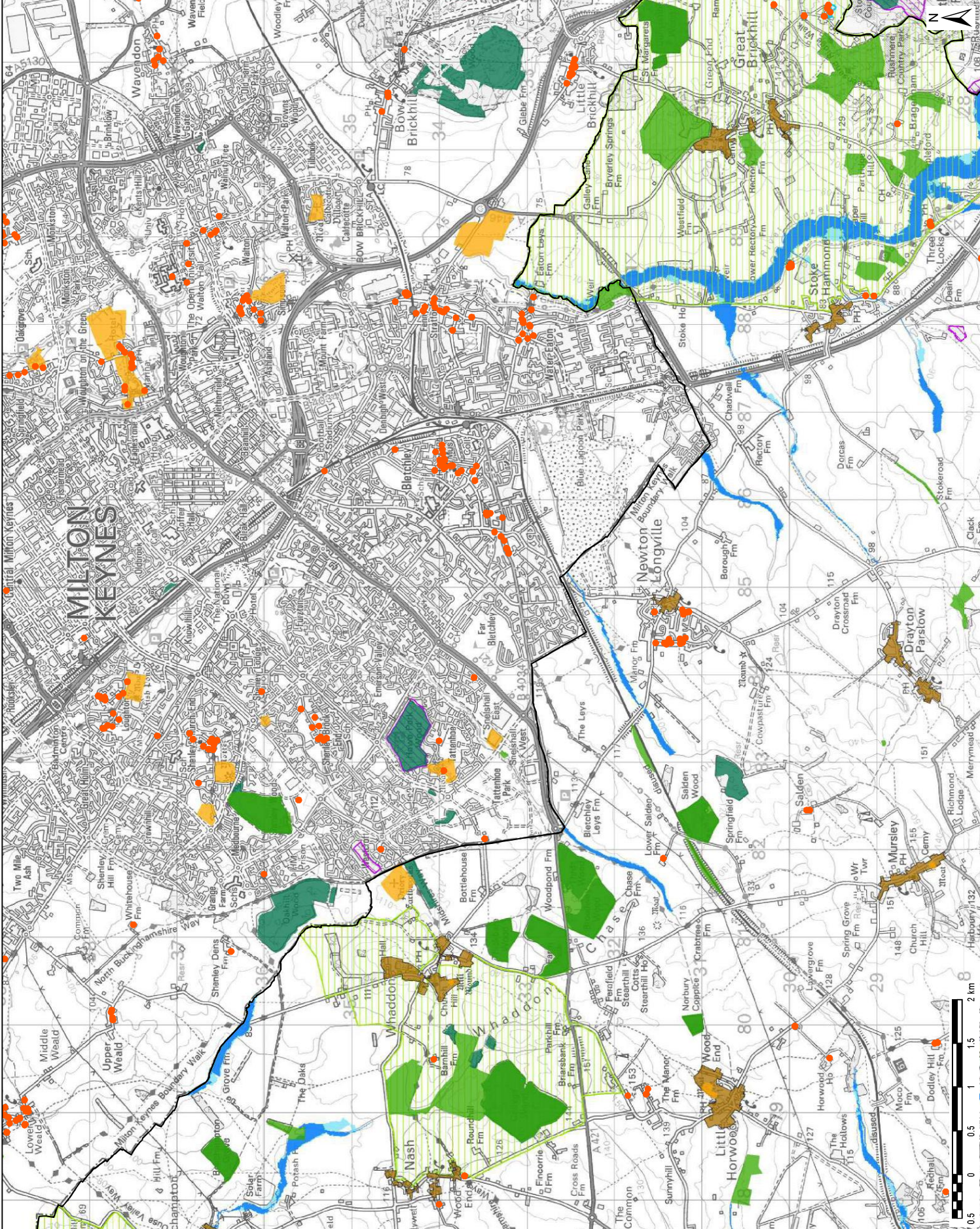
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AECOM
Scott House
Allanwood, 1001
300 Northside

A=COM
 (campsite, 063 21 77 00)
 Telephone (012 56) 3102 00
 Fax (01256) 3102 01

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FIGURE A



Topic	Relevant criteria	Comments on the scope of criteria
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic employment site • Minerals • Area of relative deprivation 	<p>It is possible to identify instances where development would lead to the loss of an employment site (i.e. the employment use would be lost to another use); however, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions (e.g. because employment site may be vacant or underperforming).</p> <p>It is also possible to consider the implications of development (whether housing or employment) in proximity to existing employment locations; and development within areas of existing employment deprivation (as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation). However, again it is difficult to draw strong conclusions.</p>

Table B: Site appraisal criteria with performance categories

Criteria	Threshold
Flood zones	R = > 50% intersects with Flood risk zone 2 or 3 A = < 50% intersects with Flood risk zone 2 or 3 G = Flood risk zone 1
Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	R = Interest A = adjacent - 400m G = >400m
Local Nature Reserve	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 2km G = >2km
Forestry Inventory Woodland	A = Intersect G = Does not intersect
Nature Reserves	A = Intersect G = Does not intersect
European Site (SAC, SPA & Ramsar)	A = < 5km G = > 5km
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 400m G = >400m
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	R = Intersect or adjacent A = <1km G = >1km
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 600m G = >600m
Common Land	R = Intersect G = adjacent - 400m
Green Belt	R = Site is within or partially within the Green Belt G = outside

Criteria	Threshold
Designated Local Landscape	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 400m G = >400m
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	R = Intersect G = Does not intersect
Village Green	A = >400m G = adjacent - 400m
Biological and Geological Important Areas	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 100m G = >100m
Local Wildlife Sites	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 400m G = >400m
Archaeological Notification Area	A = Intersect G = Does not intersect
Conservation Area	R = Intersect A = <400m
Listed Building	R = Intersect - 5m A = <50m
Registered Park or Garden	R = Intersect A = <100m
Scheduled Monument	R = Intersect A = adjacent - 100m
High quality agricultural land?	R = Grade 2 A = Grade 3 G = Does not intersect, 2 or 3
Is the site within an area that suffers from problems of overall deprivation?	R = Site does not intersect with an 'output area' that is relatively deprived A = Any of the site intersects with an 'output area' that is relatively deprived i.e. in the 20-40% (2nd quintile) most deprived in the district. G = Any of the site intersects with an 'output area' that is relatively deprived (i.e. in the 0-20% (1st quintile) most deprived in the district
Contaminated Land (High Risk)	A = Intersects G = Does not intersect
Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)	A = <1,000m from an AQMA G = >1km from an AQMA
GP surgery	R = >800m A = 400m - 800m G = <400m

Criteria	Threshold
Primary School	R = >800m A = 400m - 800m G = <400m
Secondary School	R = >2km A = 1km - 2km G = <1km
Public Right of Way (PRoW)	A = Intersects G = Does not intersect
Bus Stop	R = >800m A = 400m - 800m G = <400m
Railway Station	R = >1km G = <1km

SITE OPTIONS APPRAISAL FINDINGS

Table C presents an appraisal of all site options in terms of all the appraisal criteria introduced above, within Table B.

Site Name	Area (ha)	Flood Zone	Ancient Woodland	LNR	National Forest Inventory	Nature Reserves	SAC	SINC	SSSI	AONB	Common Land	Green Belt	Proposed Landscape	TPO	Village Green	Bio & Geo Important Areas	Local Wildlife Site	Archaeology	Conservation Area	Listed Building	Reg Parks & Gardens	Scheduled Monument	ALC	Deprivation	Contaminated Land	AQMA	GP Surgery	Primary School	Secondary School	PRow	Bus Stop	Railway Station
WGR011	0.84																															
WGR001	0.89																															
WIN001	17.82																															
NLV008	3.68																															
NLV005	1.41																															
WHA001	60.01																															
PT001	3.35																															
PT004	2.22																															
SMD007	10.29																															
SMD008	20.67																															
SMD006	30.98																															
SMD004	16.67																															
SMD005	2.87																															
SMD011	3.66																															
SMD012	12.88																															
SMD009	11.63																															
WTV018	171.2																															
WIN014	16.27																															
WIN019	5.26																															
WIN024	3.38																															
WIN016	4.52																															