

OAKLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Referendum Version



The 2011 Localism Act provided the opportunity for local communities to develop neighbourhood plans. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) states that *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need”*.

Produced by the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Group on behalf of Oakley Parish Council, the qualifying body for preparing the neighbourhood plan. The plan is based on evidence of planning requirements and local need. It has been consulted on with the people of Oakley, to ensure that it reflects the aspirations of our community.

The plan is based on a methodical approach by the people of Oakley to support actively sustainable development. It identifies the future needs for Oakley, to ensure that we support the growth of the village in a way that protects the landscape around our village, and ensures key services and infrastructure are not overstretched.

The plan is intended to align with the Draft Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030. It has empowered the people of Oakley to shape their surroundings, with a concise local neighbourhood plan setting out a positive vision for the future.

This plan represents the hard work of the Project Group and the people of Oakley and provides residents with a greater say in planning matters within an overarching sustainable development framework.

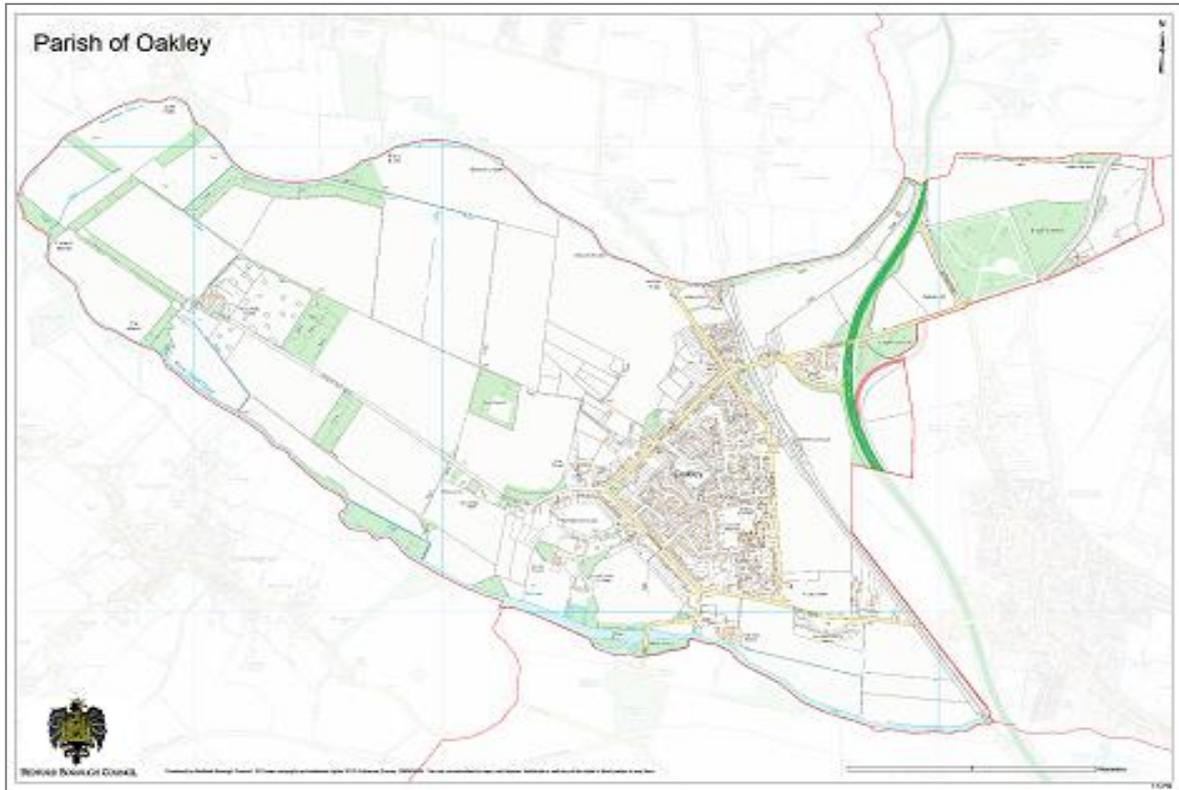


Duke of Bedford Cottages - Oakley

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1. Introduction

1.1. Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



1.1.1 Neighbourhood plans enable local communities to shape the future of their area. Unlike the Village Plan that we completed in Oakley in 2005 it is part of the statutory development plan. The processes to be followed are specified in government guidance and the whole of our community will have to agree to the plan through a referendum of registered voters.

1.1.2 The Oakley Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) will sit alongside the Bedford Borough “Local Plan”, and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan. Unlike the 2005 Village Plan, planning decisions will have to be made in accordance with the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.1.3 The Oakley Neighbourhood Plan will cover the period from 2019 to 2030.

1.2 Neighbourhood Plan Meeting the Basic Conditions

1.2.1 The Government’s intention, set out in the Localism Act which became law in 2011, was for local communities to have a greater say in how their towns and villages developed through neighbourhood planning. However, these plans need to have regard to national policy and guidance, be in general conformity with strategic local policies, help to achieve sustainable development and not



breach EU Obligations. Also, the plan must comply with human rights legislation.

1.2.2 The Bedford Borough Council Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan which covers the period up to 2021 is currently under review and is a material consideration for the development of lower level plans. The needs of the Borough up to 2030 will be updated by its 2030 Local Plan, to which it is intended that this neighbourhood plan will conform, when adopted. The level of housing required for Oakley in the Draft Local Plan 2030 is likely to be 25-50 dwellings, however this will not be finalised until the plan is adopted (expected in 2019).

1.2.3 The Localism Act allows for more development to be allocated but requires that the minimum growth to provide for the needs of local residents is accommodated. While planning applications are still determined by Bedford Borough Council the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan gives people in Oakley the ability to decide where the housing and any additional employment development should go.

1.2.4 It is important to ensure any changes in the village are sustainable. We want to improve the quality of life of present and future generations and ensure that those who live and work in the village are supported to lead healthy and fulfilled lives. To help achieve these objectives a sustainability appraisal was undertaken. Village residents were asked to identify key areas of concern, particularly with reference to transport, housing and the preservation of the identity of Oakley as a rural community with green spaces for the enjoyment of all.



River Great Ouse - Oakley

2. About Oakley

- 2.1. The village of Oakley is some four miles north west of the town of Bedford and is set within the Great Ouse valley which is an area of distinctive landscape. The River Great Ouse runs in a large loop around the village to form the northern, western and much of the southern parish boundaries. The eastern boundary is formed by the main A6, which separates Oakley from the neighbouring village of Clapham.
- 2.2. To the north east, the parish boundary crosses the A6 to incorporate Judge's Spinney and the southern and eastern edge of Browns Wood before returning to re-join the River Great Ouse.
- 2.3. Oakley is the gateway to many lovely walks along the Great Ouse valley.



It has a history stretching back to pre-medieval times, when the population was less than 100. Some of the earliest evidence of a settlement was found within the current village boundaries, and were in the form of flint axes and arrow heads from the Iron Age (circa 50BC). Oakley featured in documents pre the Norman Conquest and then in the Domesday book of 1086 when it was noted there were 2 mills in the village.

- 2.4. In 1200 it was recorded that the present Parish Church was built replacing an earlier one built of wood in Saxon Times. Oakley was bought by The Duke of Bedford in 1737 and was farmed on the 3-field system. The Duke of Bedford drained the Oakley fields and he built Oakley House, designed by Henry Holland as a residence for his eldest son the Marquise of Tavistock.
- 2.5. The winding roads in the village were straightened. A new road – Station Road was constructed and Duck End Road renamed Church Lane. The Old School that was in two dilapidated cottages were demolished and the present building built in 1842. A station was constructed in 1849 and demolished in 1957.
- 2.6. The 7th Duke decided to improve the estate and built many cottages in the village. The Duke of Bedford cottages and farm houses have their own unique style. Many large landowners in the 19th century built the dwellings to reflect their status as well as improving the living conditions of their workers.
- 2.7. In 1918 the Oakley Estate was sold at auction and each tenant was given the opportunity of purchasing his own residence and many did. The village reverted to private ownership and was no longer a ducal estate.
- 2.8. The expansion of Oakley really started in the 1920s. During the 1920s, Lovell Homes were built, together with bungalows to the north side of Church Lane. The 1930s saw more building in Church Lane and in-filling in the High Street and with these houses the arrival of electricity and piped water. After the 1939-



45 war, building resumed. This included planning permission for development on Grange Farm in the centre of the village. Sewage disposal came in 1959-1960.

- 2.9. By 1970, a number of houses had been constructed commencing with Ruffs Furze and Dewlands. These were built on open plan principles. As a consequence of these developments the population of the village grew to 3 times its original size. The road names on the new development were taken from the enclosure map of 1798.
- 2.10. In the last 20 years further developments, principally in Station Road, Lovell Road and Pavenham Road, totalling more than 65 homes have been constructed. All have their own distinctive character built as closes and have retained the open landscape principle. These developments have included a number of housing association rented and shared ownership homes, low cost housing units and apartments.
- 2.11. The built environment is reflected in the open plan principles of the centre of the village. Three of the recent closes have followed the design principles of the estate cottages and the open plan nature of the centre of the village. Any future development needs to protect our historic buildings and enhance their setting.
- 2.12. A new Village Hall was constructed and the Sports Club enhanced. Small scale industrial units have been built where appropriate to encourage local employment opportunities, such as on Highfield Road.
- 2.13. Today more than 2,500 people live within the parish boundary. The village sustains a well-used post office/village shop, a beauty salon, an upholsterer, a local pub, a very active sports and social club, two churches, a café, a day centre for the elderly plus a pre-school and both primary and secondary schools.
- 2.14. To date, development in the village has been informed by Bedford Borough Council planning policies contained in the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (April 2008), the Allocation and Designations Local Plan (July 2013) and Bedford Borough Local Plan (October 2002). In addition, the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment (April 2014) is considered in the decision-making process.
- 2.15. These policies have recognised the importance of the River Great Ouse and the valley in terms of landscape and biodiversity; the historic built environment and the need for its protection and enhancement. In addition, the maintenance of a “gap” between Oakley and the neighbouring village of Clapham was considered important. For these reasons housing development has been limited to “in-fill” with significant development confined to the settlement edges e.g. “The Furlong”, Pavenham Road.



2.16. Oakley has managed to provide and maintain excellent facilities for its population whilst retaining its rural feel. Much of this has been achieved through the deliberate establishment and maintenance of green spaces, which are used for a variety of uses such as sport, recreation, school activities and community events and provide a 'soft edge' to the village.

2.17. The nature of the green spaces is diverse; ranging from ancient wooded areas through to a village green that was established with the development of the village centre in the 1970s. The value of these spaces ranges from providing open spaces for recreation and relaxation to specific areas of natural beauty, such as the approaches to Oakley over the two bridges, through to areas of particular biodiversity, such as Browns Wood.

2.18. The people of Oakley are keen to protect the unique look and feel of the parish, its historic buildings and to retain its character and appearance.

3. Aims of the Plan

3.1. The objective is to encourage the evolution of Oakley in terms of local and national needs while maintaining its character and utility for its residents and those employed within the Parish. It is a good place to live and to allow this factor to be lost would be a mistake regretted by future generations.

4. Community Consultation and Engagement

Consultation

4.1. A survey of village residents was carried out to identify key areas of concern, particularly with reference to transport, housing and the preservation of the identity of Oakley as a rural community with green spaces for the enjoyment of all.

4.2. Residents were also consulted on their views on the landscape features that they considered to be important. This consultation took place in two ways:

- i. Firstly, through a consultation event in the Village Hall, where residents were asked to identify either on a map or by writing on post-it stickers, the landscape features they considered to be important.
- ii. The main areas identified in the consultation event were incorporated into the landscape section of the village Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, which was delivered to every household and was also available for residents to complete online.

4.3. The five landscape areas identified in the questionnaire were as follows:

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1. The river, river bridges and river valleys that surround much of our village and the associated fields and meadows.
 2. The views to and from the village over open countryside.
 3. Wooded areas such as Browns Wood and Judge's Spinney.
 4. Open spaces separating Oakley from Clapham and other villages.
 5. The open and rural feel of our village characterised by the hedge and tree lined principal roads – the open frontages in the centre of the village and the Village Green.

4.4. Respondents were asked to identify the level of importance they attached to each area and also to indicate areas not included in the list which they considered important. The results from the questionnaire showed that all five areas were important/very important to the residents of the village.

4.5. The findings from the Oakley LCA, coupled with the Bedford Borough LCA, clearly align with the views expressed through the village Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire. Both indicate that the conservation and enhancement of the historic and landscape character of Oakley village and the surrounding area are key priorities for residents when considering future developments.

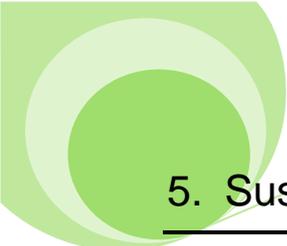
Engagement

4.6. Throughout the preparation of the plan we regularly consulted and engaged the community. Since the launch event in October 2014 we have:

1. Provided regular updates in the Oakley Village Newsletter which is published 4 times a year.
2. Launched a website in 2014 specifically for the neighbourhood plan.
3. Produced a newsletter questionnaire in March 2015.
4. Published an update in the 2015 and 2016 Oakley Directory.
5. Produced a more specific questionnaire in October 2015.
6. Gave an update at the 2016 Parish Council Annual Meeting.
7. Arrange for a Housing Needs Survey to be carried out in March 2016.
8. Completed a consultation exercise regarding the draft policies in January 2017.
9. Gave an update at the 2018 Parish Council Annual Meeting.
10. Exhibition in Oakley Village Hall on 13th May 2018.
11. Completed the 6 week statutory consultation in September/October 2018.

4.7. The opinions and comments arising from community engagement exercises help form the basis on which this plan was written. Likewise, the policies are formed both on community engagement and based on a clear planning rationale, underpinned by relevant data/evidence.

4.8. Further information about our consultation can be found in the Consultation Statement submitted with this plan to the Borough Council.



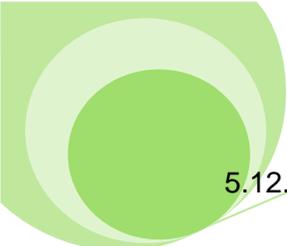
5. Sustainable Development for Oakley

- 5.1. Sustainability has social, economic and environmental dimensions. Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including:
- we will support the creation of jobs in the existing industrial sites. The current availability of Superfast Broadband in the village is helpful in this regard and other technological improvements should be encouraged.
 - moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature and the wider environment including by building on brownfield sites and the preservation and protection of existing green spaces;
 - ensuring good design which conserves and enhances Oakley's heritage, with particular regard to the use of sustainable building materials and energy efficiency;
 - improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure;
 - widening the choice of high quality homes; in particular, the range of housing to allow residents to upsize or downsize according to their family's needs. The Lovell Homes, originally designated as sheltered housing for retired agricultural workers now provides accommodation for up to 60 residents, but more new small dwellings are required both for this group and also for young people needing starter homes;
 - ensuring that developers contribute to the cost of building village amenities and infrastructure;
 - Oakley currently has no general practice outreach service, but re-establishment of this would be an urgent aspiration in the light of further development in the Parish;
 - the Parish has educational provision for children from pre-school to age 16.
- 5.2. There have been a number of new developments over the last 20 years which have been sympathetic to our village. Feedback from Oakley residents support an additional 20 to 50 houses being built in the village over the next 15 years, targeted to specific housing needs. This differs to the 25 to 50 dwellings proposal for the Local Plan. There is widespread support for 1-2 bedroom houses and bungalows and this was confirmed by a housing needs survey.
- 5.3. We need to take into account the character of any new development in the village in terms of design, density and open spaces.
- 5.4. Oakley has grown from a small agricultural community to a substantial village with a strong independent identity. However, this growth and that of the surrounding villages has increased pressure on parking, traffic volumes, infrastructure and schooling. The core roads are not of the correct standard to take current levels of traffic and some only have footpaths on one side. Access



to the village is restricted on a number of routes particularly the twin bridges on Church Lane.

- 5.5. Residents regularly raise concerns regarding the quality of the roads and footpaths, the speed of traffic through the village and parking around the school at peak times. These concerns are raised in relation to environmental impacts and the inherent danger of narrow roads, limited footpath access and poor parking, especially when buses and larger vans are involved. See Appendix 3 for location of - Oakley Road Study which supports these comments.
- 5.6. We will seek to ensure good design principles are incorporated within any new development including the use of sustainable building materials and energy efficiency. The proposed density of properties and building heights (no greater than 2 storeys) will also be closely looked at.
- 5.7. When new developments are agreed we must ensure that developers contribute to the cost of building new village amenities and infrastructure, and provide sustainable facilities within the new development boundary, such as green spaces, play areas, footpaths and adequate parking.
- 5.8. The redevelopment of existing properties needs to be closely looked at to ensure we do not change the housing stock balance to the detriment of our needs. Planning applications to increase property size of 1-2 bedroom houses and bungalows may not always be supported.
- 5.9. There is a strong core of local businesses that are regularly used by the large majority of residents. There are also 3 small light industrial parks. Oakley is an entrepreneurial village with a very large proportion of micro-businesses with over 120 employer organisations in the parish. These range from basic cleaning to highly skilled professional services working with international clients. A very strong communications infrastructure is vital for such businesses and we will work with providers of high-speed broadband and mobile phone services to ensure they provide high quality and reliable services to all.
- 5.10. The largest single employer in the parish is Lincroft School which also serves several surrounding parishes. Along with Oakley Primary School it provides a prime focus for the community but also is the source of significant traffic issues.
- 5.11. Local businesses, especially the shop and post office, are used by the large majority of residents at least once a week and form a key element of the village community. Having a range of day-to-day services and facilities accessible within the parish, makes it a stronger, more sustainable community without losing its rural character.

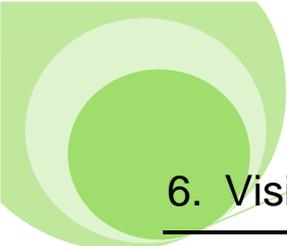
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- 5.12. Micro businesses both provide and feed off such services. Not only do they bring income and provide employment but also often make use of local services where practical, thereby providing an additional boost to the village economy. They are a key element of a thriving rural community without adding to traffic congestion.
 - 5.13. Good transport links to Bedford, Milton Keynes, London and major airports are a major factor enabling small rural-based businesses to interact with customers and suppliers.
 - 5.14. Businesses with very few employees also require local support in terms of social contact, especially to discuss shared problems and issues. The availability of a pub, social club, coffee shop and other meeting places is important in maintaining the welfare of home workers. However, micro businesses are often vulnerable and the provision of local business support needs to be considered.
 - 5.15. One of the main constraints on new organisations with employees and the expansion of current organisations within the parish is their potential impact on traffic congestion and parking. In considering proposals for new organisations or the expansion of existing organisations which require additional parking and access through the village, the impact of the proposal on traffic congestion and parking will be an important consideration to be weighed against any economic or social benefits.
 - 5.16. Our infrastructure of roads, footpaths and cycleways should be properly maintained and added to as required. The provision of a cycleway to Clapham along Lovell Road is seen by residents as a priority. Further footpaths and cycleways should be considered by the local authority to reduce the use of cars and enhance safety.
 - 5.17. We need to monitor through traffic behaviour and growth and take appropriate action to ensure a safe and balanced environment for residents. The use of traffic management tools such as average speed cameras should be used when and where appropriate.
 - 5.18. Surface water drainage is an issue at certain locations within the village and any development must not add to the load on existing systems.
 - 5.19. Protecting and improving the quality of water entering the River Great Ouse from Oakley would help prevent harm to the European sites downstream (Portholme SAC, The Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar).
 - 5.20. Both a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) have been completed for the Parish of Oakley. See Annex 3 for details.

5.21. Certain properties also suffer from sewer flooding and again future development must not add to the existing problems. Additional capacity may be required in the Anglian Water pumping station to address existing problems and to provide capacity for future developments.

5.22. The Parish Council will look very closely at any proposed developments in the village and the impact on the sewerage capacity.



Oakley Allotments – Pavenham Road



6. Vision and Objectives

- 6.1. The Vision and Objectives for the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan have been developed and refined through consultation with the local community.

Vision

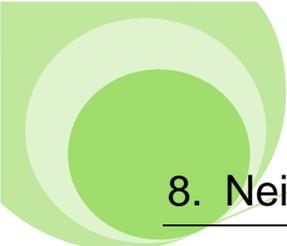
To protect and improve the village community and the landscape within which it sits.

Objectives

1. Understand current housing stock, identify future requirements and if a need is established, look to identify potential development sites.
2. Protect views across the countryside and green spaces of significance.
3. Protect and enhance the setting of Oakley's heritage which underpins its local distinctiveness and character.
4. Maintain a sustainable community, including a sustainable business community, with adequate infrastructure and facilities.
5. Identify and enhance links to the countryside, other villages and Bedford Town.

7. Plan Monitoring and Review

- 7.1. The plan will be monitored annually to see that its policies are being effective. A formal review will take place every two years unless an earlier review is considered justified.



8. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Overall Growth Strategy

- 8.1. The following Neighbourhood Plan Policies seek to ensure that Oakley remains a good place to live and work and is a place of opportunity where everybody can realise their full potential.
- 8.2. Oakley should remain a place where people feel connected with the village and are proud to celebrate its rich natural and built environment, diversity, and history. There needs to be a balance between enabling growth to meet local need and protecting important natural and built environments.
- 8.3. We want to improve the quality of life of present and future generations. The policies should help facilitate the development of housing, micro-businesses and the infrastructure they rely on.
- 8.4. The overall growth strategy is based on identifying the most sustainable areas where housing and business development can be placed, whilst also protecting sensitive landscapes and preventing uncontrolled development of the rural area. The Oakley settlement policy area is enlarged by this neighbourhood plan to accommodate housing growth, to meet local need.
- 8.5. To make Oakley more sustainable, links to other areas need to be improved. A priority will be promoting and improving sustainable travel links to the nearby settlements of Bedford, Clapham and Bromham. This goes beyond the scope of the neighbourhood plan policies for the most part, but there is also an emphasis on balanced transport provision within Oakley itself.
- 8.6. The policies help to maintain the distinct, separate and rural identity of the village. In particular, policies seek to avoid coalescence between settlements. Local Green Spaces are protected, which provide village residents with much appreciated places for relaxation and recreation, as well as areas of biodiversity, natural beauty, and historic value.
- 8.7. The Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment published in May 2014 states that 'The overall landscape strategy for the Oakley – Great Ouse Limestone Valley character area is to conserve the historic limestone villages, the riverside features such as stone bridges and mills and the tranquil river corridor flanked by woodland belts ... Elements to be enhanced would be the field boundaries ..., the management/restoration of the riverside pastures/grassland ..., and the integration of recent development with the surrounding rural landscape...'.
- 8.8. These aims have been translated into policy. In preparing the policies of this neighbourhood plan, the requirements of the Basic Conditions have been met, including the need for them to be evidence-based. The following documents



have formed part of the evidence base for policies. Other documents mentioned throughout the plan are shown at Annex 3.

- Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan, April 2008;
- Allocations and Designations Local Plan, July 2013;
- Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment, April 2014 (and particularly the sections on Landscape Character Area 3B Oakley – Great Ouse Limestone Valley and Landscape Character Area 2A Hinwick Wooded Wolds);
- Bedford Borough Council Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities SPD 2014;
- Bedford Borough Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy November 2015;
- Draft Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 and its evidence base;
- Oakley Landscape Character Assessment;
- Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Road Study 2016;
- Bedford Rural Communities Charity Housing Survey for Oakley, 2016;
- Bedford Borough Housing Strategy 2012-2020 and reviewed 2016 – 2020;
- Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2016;
- Bedford Borough Data analysis of the census 2013;
- Bedford Borough Considering the Historic Environment within a Neighbourhood Plan
- Historic England Guidance
- Historic England Data

8.9. The following pages contain the policies that will deliver sustainable development and growth in Oakley.

Housing

Purpose

8.10. To enable expansion of the Oakley settlement and accommodate housing growth, based on local need, whilst maintaining the rural character of the village.

Planning Rational and Evidence

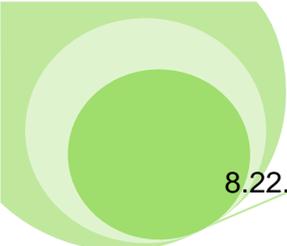
8.11. There are currently 974 dwellings in the parish of Oakley, contained predominately within the defined settlement area of Oakley village. The built-up central area of Oakley village is surrounded by four roads, with four small linear developments.

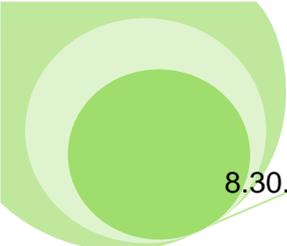
8.12. The houses were planned with many small open spaces and with grass verges. A village green was added later in the centre of the village, with play equipment appropriate to pre-school and older children. There have since



been four small linear developments of between 20 and 37 dwellings and they have the same open space character of the earlier 1970s development.

- 8.13. Two of the highways into the village comprise narrow, single-track carriageway roads and the further highway forms a crossroads with “no” category roads. All the roads in the village are less than ‘c’ category.
- 8.14. Paragraph 8, sub-section b) of the NPPF 2019 discusses the dimensions of sustainable development and describes a social objective.
- 8.15. Paragraphs 61 and 62 of the NPPF 2019 require that planning policies address housing needs, including the need for affordable housing.
- 8.16. The BBC Housing Strategy Review 2016 noted that there is a need to provide affordable housing in rural settlements through a process of active management of growth. It was noted that physical and social infrastructure implications need to be considered. “Where it is demonstrated that market housing will contribute to the viability of the scheme, consideration should be given to the provision of smaller more affordable dwellings”. “The rural population is older and ageing faster on average, than the urban population.... Alongside starter homes many parishes wish to see the provision of owner occupied accommodation for people down-sizing” This will enable elderly people to remain in their villages where they are more likely to be supported and lead a social life. The SHMA suggests that 5% of the dwellings should be mobility dwellings on sites of 20 or more houses. The BBC Housing Strategy promotes a mixture of housing types.
- 8.17. The Borough Council policy of 30% affordable homes has already had a positive effect in Oakley on land adjacent to 24 Lovell Road. A scheme of 15 houses will provide 5 affordable homes.
- 8.18. The definition of the different category of affordable homes are given in the Government’s Housing and Planning Bill 2016 and recorded in the BBC Housing Strategy Review 2016. The government definition of affordable housing is given in the NPPF 2019.
- 8.19. The BBC analysis of the census in 2013 states that the population of Oakley at 2011 was 2,493. There are 948 households and there are 974 dwellings. Oakley has a relatively young age profile for villages with 23% of residents aged 0-15 years and only 16% aged over 65. A diverse mix of non-white population form 8% of the population.
- 8.20. Nearly 70% of households are couples. A total of 18% are one-person households are mainly pensioners and this is below average for rural parishes. A total of 7% of all households are lone parents with dependent children.
- 8.21. Oakley has a high home ownership of 86%, with 5% of households renting from social landlords and 8% renting privately.

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- 8.22. Accommodation comprises of 42% detached, 45% semi-detached, 9.4% terraced and 3.4% are flats.
- 8.23. Bedford Borough Council (BBC) has worked on the Draft Local Plan 2030. As part of the analysis, BBC has devised a comparison modal that ranks individual settlement areas against each other. These are based on criteria that includes local services, infrastructure and community assets. Oakley has been designated as a rural service centre and has been set a potential growth target of between 25-50 dwellings for the duration of the plan (estimated to be between 2018 and 2030). This is based on the BBC-commissioned 2012 survey.
- 8.24. The BRCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity) housing surveys are based on the Bedford Borough formula. Oakley used the BRCC survey to conduct the survey into Oakley's housing needs up to 2030.
- 8.25. This neighbourhood plan responds positively to the supply of new homes by expanding the settlement policy area to accommodate a further 25 to 50 dwellings over the plan period to 2030. NDP commissioned Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity to carry out a Housing Need Survey which identified the affordable housing need as 15 units – 3 x 1 or 2 bedroom houses for rent, 6 x 2 bed houses for rent/shared ownership for young adults; 3 x 3 houses for rent/shared ownership for families and 3 x 2 bed bungalows for older people to downsize. Market housing need was identified as up to 30 houses that would meet reasonable need considering the size of the village.
- 8.26. The questionnaire conducted by the NDP group supported the BRCC survey that the dwellings should meet the housing need and that dwellings should be available to enable older people to move to more suitable accommodation.
- 8.27. The BBC Housing Strategy 2012-2010 and reviewed 2016-2020 supports the need for affordable homes. The SHMA supports the need for mobility dwellings and the BBC Strategic Housing Market Assessment is part of the 2021-2030 local plan preparations.
- 8.28. Any built development should harmonise with the village, within the landscape setting of the River Great Ouse. The Bedford Landscape Character Assessment April 2014 acknowledges the importance of the landscape around and within Oakley. The questionnaire conducted by the NDP group identified that the open character of the village developments and the importance of the landscape around and within the village should be retained and enhanced. This is dealt with later in the landscape and design policies.
- 8.29. The 2013 BBC analysis of the data from the census returns states that Oakley already has a mixture of housing that supports a sustainable, mixed and inclusive community. It is essential that any new development delivers quality homes that support the ongoing viability and prosperity of the village.



8.30. Any housing development must provide a mixture of housing to meet the needs of the community.

8.31. Consultation from the emerging local neighbourhood plan and the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) housing survey showed the key issues that this policy seeks to address. These key issues are identified in the BBC Housing Strategy 2012 then reviewed in 2016 which are incorporated into the current local plan to 2021 and the proposed BBC Local Plan to 2030 which was submitted for examination on 14 December 2018 and is expected to be adopted before the end of 2019. The BBC Landscape Character Assessment 2014 and the Census analysis supports these key issues.

8.32. The BRCC Housing Survey showed support for 1, 2 or 3 bedroom houses for the rent or shared ownership for young people or families and bungalows for older residents. BBC Housing Strategy states that houses developments of 20+ houses should have 5% of dwellings that meet the mobility needs of residents.

8.33. The NDP consultation showed support for the development of between 20-50 dwellings for the duration of the plan. The Draft BBC Local Plan 2030 has identified that Oakley has to provide 25-50 dwellings up to 2030.

8.34. The NDP consultation showed that development should be on small sites on the edge of the village rather than a large site.

8.35. That development should be on Brownfield sites.

8.36. That conversion of existing redundant empty or derelict buildings to new dwellings would be supported.

8.37. Development should not have a detrimental impact on the entrances and exits to and from Oakley.

8.38. Development should not have a detrimental impact on the open countryside.

8.39. Development should not impact on the open spaces between Oakley and Clapham.

8.40. Development should reflect the open and rural feel of the village characterised by the hedge tree lined principal roads and the open frontages in the centre of the village and the Village Green.

8.41. Documents supporting this policy:
NPPF 2019; BBC Standards for Sustainable Development; BBC Landscape Character Assessment 2014; BBC Housing Strategy 2012 reviewed 2016; BBC SHMA 2016; Oakley Village Landscape Character Assessment; BBC analysis of census data 2013; BBC Local Plan 2002; BBC Draft Local Plan



2030; Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity – Housing Survey; Oakley Questionnaire.

- 8.42. The Bedford Borough Draft Local Plan 2030 identifies Oakley as a rural service centre which has been allocated 25-50 new dwellings over the period of the plan.

ONP HG1: Housing Growth in Oakley

To help meet the requirement for new housing within Oakley the following sites are allocated for residential development:

- **Land at Station Road to accommodate about 30 dwellings (Site 170)**
- **Land to the rear of High Street to accommodate about 10 dwellings (Site 171)**

Planning applications for the development of these allocated sites should have regard to the Housing Site Design Brief set out in Annex 4.

In addition to the allocated sites, housing development will be supported on sites located within the Settlement Policy Area and where it would not cause harmful impact on the adjoining rural area.

Housing development outside of the Settlement Policy Area will be supported where it meets all the following requirements:

- **It would comprise infill development within an existing housing row or cluster;**
- **It would complement the existing housing and not lead to any harmful change to the established character of the locality;**
- **It would result in existing housing or the proposed housing having adequate garden space to support outdoor seating, drying of clothes, play and other typical garden uses; and**
- **It would avoid the creation of further linear or ribbon development along roads in and around the settlement.**

Proposals to bring forward sites as an exception to this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant policies of the Bedford Borough Council Development Plan.

Interpretation

- 8.43. This policy focuses housing growth in and around the existing main settlement in Oakley (within the Settlement Policy Area). The policy prevents housing development in the wider rural area, where it would harm the character and sustainability of the settlement. Infill housing is allowed outside of the Settlement Policy Area, subject to the sustainability tests set out in the policy.



The issue of loss of garden space would involve consideration of both amenity (area of garden space) and character (avoiding cramming).

ONP HG2: Housing Mix

Housing developments of 5 houses or more must include a balanced mix of house types to meet local need. The mix of housing should include 1 and 2 bedroom housing to meet the needs of first time buyers and those wishing to downsize. This includes at least one house of 1 or 2 bedrooms per 5 houses.

Developers must justify the mix of housing in any planning application, based on evidence of local housing need.

Interpretation

- 8.44. Developers will need to provide evidence of local need to support planning applications, demonstrating that the mix of house types addresses local need. Developers to identify the latest available data on housing need.

Business and Employment

Purpose

- 8.45. To ensure Oakley is a viable place to live and work, to encourage and support the development of micro businesses.

Planning rational & evidence

- 8.46. Oakley has three industrial sites with adequate capacity for growth. These are:
- Highfield Road (Highfield Parc)
 - Pavenham Road (Willow Vale)
 - Station Road
- 8.47. The Willow Vale site is close to environmentally sensitive areas, so care is required in considering the impact of development proposals.
- 8.48. The village has more than a hundred micro businesses, which enhance its economic vibrancy and sustainability. Enterprises of this type need strong support, not only in terms of data and voice communications but also for social contact to share ideas and issues.
- 8.49. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF 2019 encourages business growth in rural areas.
- 8.50. Paragraph 3.9 Rural Policy Area and Core Policy CP18 of the Bedford Borough Council Core Strategy & Rural Issues Plan (April 2008) are relevant.
- 8.51. Oakley Neighbourhood Development Plan Businesses Study 2015 states:



“it is important to control the scale of organisations in the village in order to maintain the right balance of the community and to ensure their growth does not impinge on the defining characteristics of the village.”

8.52. Local businesses are a very important element of the community. Of those responding to the questionnaire:

- 36% of residents use a local business every day and a further 55% use at least one every week (i.e. only 9% of residents do not use local businesses on a regular basis).
- 22% had local employment in the village.
- 71% highlighted broadband speed as a major requirement for new businesses, followed by 55% who regarded improved mobile phone coverage as a major factor.

8.53. The key existing businesses that serve the community include Oakley Post Office & village shop, the Bedford Arms pub, Hazel Kaye Hair and Beauty Salon and the Oakley Sports and Social Club.

8.54. Another key factor to the sustainable development of this rural area is access to high-speed broadband. According to the government’s Broad Band UK office (BDUK) the Government’s national target is for 95% of people in each local authority area to be put within reach of a fixed line superfast broadband service by 2017. This is described as a service that offers speeds of greater than 24 Megabits per second (i.e. 24Mbps+, or 25Mbps).

ONP BE1: Business

Employment development (as defined by Use Class B1, B2 and B8 of the General Development Order) will be supported in the following locations:

- **Within the Highfield Park, Willow Vale and Station Road business parks.**
- **Within existing business or industrial sites.**

Providing there is no significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents or to local landscape and rural character; and

Subject to an assessment of the impact of any new employment development on the highway network to demonstrate that the proposals would not result in any unacceptable increase in traffic congestion, noise or vibration and would not cause harm to road safety or the air quality of residents.

Interpretation

8.55. A particular issue in the area is heavy traffic, so particular regard would need to be made to any likely additional traffic generation, especially involving heavy vehicles.

8.56. The sensitivities of the area’s natural and built environment and need to protect the amenities of residents are further factors, likely to be problematical



for B2 or B8 uses. The protection of biodiversity and/or habitats and species is another important factor.

8.57. Harm to amenity could include impact of noise, disturbance, dust, smell, vibration, visual intrusion and other factors.

ONP BE2: Retail and Community Facilities

New retail and professional services (A1, A2) and other community facilities will be supported within the existing centre of Oakley which is bounded by Lovell Road, Station Road, High Street and Church Lane, where there would be no significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents.

Interpretation

8.58. The policy enables A1 and A2 uses, where they are of a scale and nature that would complement existing facilities. The intention is to allow local facilities in the interests of making Oakley a more sustainable settlement.

8.59. Harm to amenity could include impact of noise, disturbance, additional traffic movement, smells and other factors.

ONP BE3: Public Houses

Development proposals involving the use and development of existing public houses will be supported, providing:

- **the use as a public house continues as part of the scheme;**
- **there is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residential properties.**

Interpretation

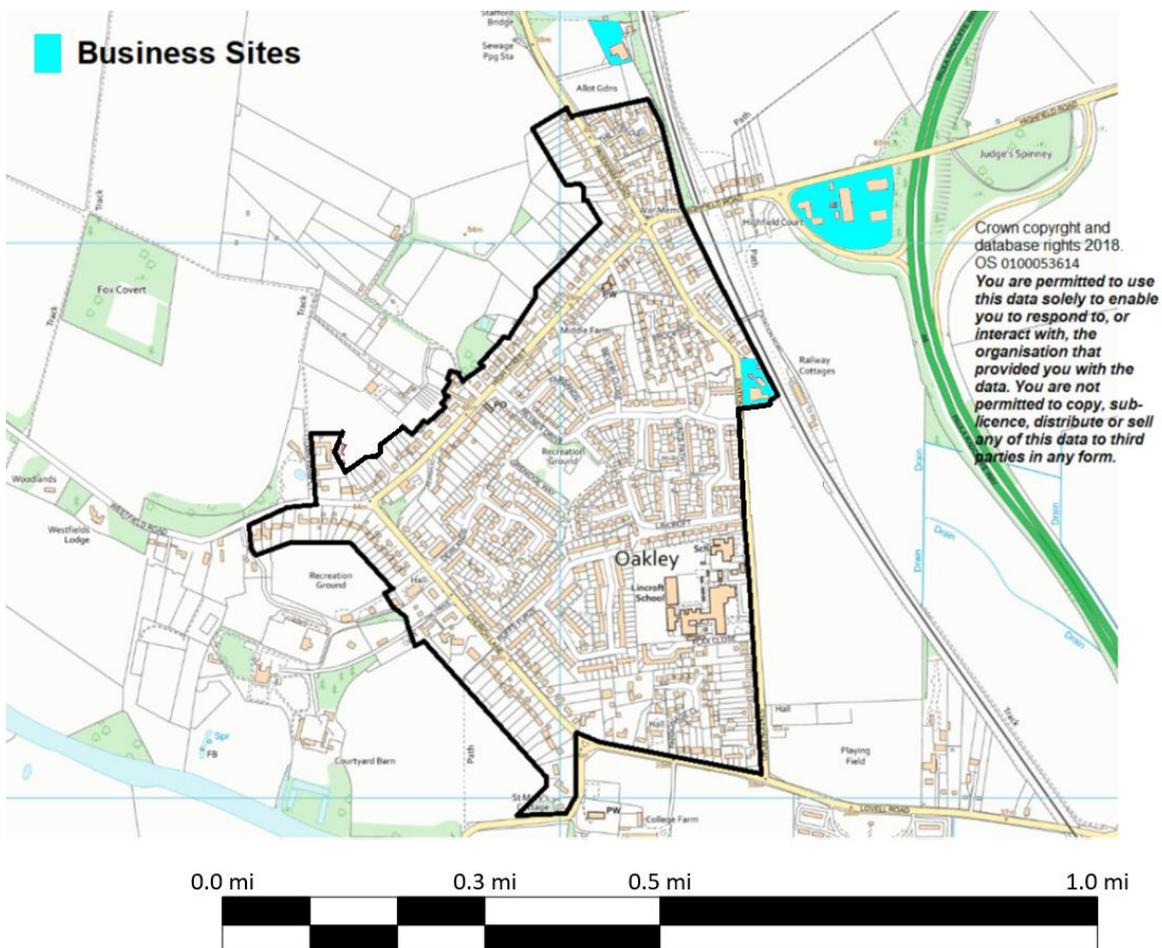
8.60. This policy allows the public house (or public houses, if more are developed within the plan period) to expand, subject to amenity considerations. It also allows pubs to diversify to include other uses, but also ensures that the core use as a public house is not lost.

ONP BE4: Broadband Connectivity

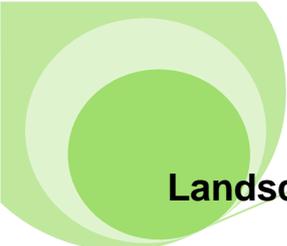
New development, including new housing and commercial schemes, should wherever reasonably possible incorporate high-speed internet connectivity.

Interpretation

- 8.61. The purpose of Policy BG4 is to ensure new development is ready for connection within the development to faster services. This promotes sustainable live/work patterns by enabling home working and supporting local business.
- 8.62. High speed is defined by the government's Broad Band UK office as service that offers speeds of greater than 24 Megabits per second (i.e. 24Mbps+, or 25Mbps).
- 8.63. Developers should work with providers of telecommunication infrastructure to deliver the necessary physical infrastructure connections within the development to accommodate information and digital communications networks as an integral part of all appropriate new developments. A connectivity statement should be included with relevant planning applications to demonstrate broadband access and speed will be sufficient.



Map showing business sites in Oakley



Landscape

Purpose

- 8.64. To protect the rural and open character of Oakley, including significant landscape areas and green spaces.

Rationale and Evidence

- 8.65. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF 2019 encourages the enhancement of the natural environment.
- 8.66. The planning evidence base for landscape and environmental policies includes various local documents, as follows.
- 8.67. The **Bedford Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (BBLCA) (April 2014) pages 69-73 “3B Oakley – Great Ouse Limestone Valley”** (see annex 3) was taken as an “umbrella” document for the wider area.
- 8.68. A more detailed local assessment of the village and its setting within the surrounding landscape was then carried out by the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- 8.69. This local assessment is called the **Oakley Village Landscape Character Assessment** (see annex 3).
- 8.70. The Landscape Strategy for the Oakley - Great Ouse Limestone Valley in this document includes:
- Highlighting the importance of the **River Great Ouse and its valley** as the most dominant and important features of the surrounding landscape, for natural beauty and biodiversity. It is important to “conserve, enhance and create areas of floodplain landscape with flood meadows and marshes where appropriate” (3B.1.17). Similarly, the same guidelines recommend the need to “conserve and enhance the riparian vegetation that defines the course of the River Great Ouse, with opportunities for enhanced habitat management and restoration” (3B.1.18). It is of particular importance therefore that the entire river and river valley areas in the parish are protected from development and that positive action is taken to enhance the area in terms of woodland planting and habitat management in line with the recommendations in the Landscape Strategy.
 - **The Two Limestone Bridges** on the approach into Oakley from Bromham provide distinctive entrance to the village. The views across the meadows to Oakley Church (Grade I Listed), epitomises the village. Taken together with the long views up and down the river, these bridges form a key part of the character of Oakley.

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- The landscape setting of the area surrounding **Stafford Bridge** should be protected from further development. This area should encompass both Lynch Furlong and the allotments as well as the immediate area surrounding the bridge.
 - There is a need to conserve and enhance the approaches to the village **into Bromham and Pavenham**. From Bromham, this should include the floodplains and fields on both sides of the river on the approach to St. Mary's Church, as well as the views both to and from the Church. Also views to and from Oakley House, located further along the same stretch of the river.
 - The protection of long views to and from the village is highlighted in section 3B.1.24, which states, "conserve the natural floodplain landform and long views – avoid further introduction of embankments in the landscape which interrupt the landform and restrict views". The escarpment that runs along the village east from Westfield Road, behind the High Street and along Highfield Road up to Browns Wood, provides superb views in both a northerly and southerly direction of the north Bedfordshire villages and back towards Bedford itself and the Greensand Ridge. These views are particularly stunning from the east end of the escarpment from areas such as Judge's Spinney. From the north, the majority of the village lies unseen behind the escarpment, leaving clear uninterrupted views of the River Great Ouse and surrounding countryside. Similarly, the open countryside to the west offers beautiful views across the river valley.
 - The need to maintain Oakley as a separate entity, avoiding coalescence with other villages is highlighted in BBLCA (3B.1.23), which states, "improve settlement edges to maintain separation between settlements". The current area of open landscape east of Station Road opposite the schools, extending from the Old Station in the north, to Lovell Road in the south, should ideally be protected from development to prevent coalescence with Clapham.
 - Any future development should "conserve the nucleated stone built villages and avoid linear extension along roads which may threaten the individual identity of the villages" (3B.1.22).
 - The village of Oakley is situated in a rural setting and has many features that cause it to have a distinct identity. In order to conserve this identity, the hedgrows and trees should be protected.
 - The village should, "conserve the rural character of the minor roads". (3B.1.21)
 - "discourage the introduction of suburban style materials e.g. kerbs and extensive lighting" (3B.1.21).
 - It is important that the character of the nucleated stone built village is conserved (BBLCA – 3B.1.22). This should also take into account the very open, semi-rural character of the centre of the village, especially around the village green. The open plan front gardens and the areas of public open space e.g. Grange Close also contribute to the character of the village.

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- Elsewhere, semi-wooded areas of the village and the hedges lining the principal roads and enclosing front gardens provide a more rural feel to the village and should be conserved.

8.71. Whilst the Oakley LCA was being developed, residents of Oakley were asked for their views on features of Oakley's landscape that they considered to be important. This consultation took place in two ways:

1. A Consultation Event held in the Village Hall, where residents were asked to state their views (either on a map of the parish or by writing on post-it stickers) along with the details of landscape features that they considered important.
2. A Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire where the principal landscape features identified by those attending the Consultation Event were included to allow further comment before being incorporated into the Landscape section of the Village Plan. The Questionnaire was delivered to every household and available for residents to complete online. The objective was to ensure that a larger number of people had the opportunity to comment.

8.72. The five landscape areas identified by those attending the Consultation Event and then included in in the Questionnaire were as follows:

1. The river, river bridges and river valleys that surround much of our village and the associated fields and meadows.
2. The views to and from the village over open countryside.
3. Wooded areas such as Browns Wood and Judge's Spinney.
4. Open spaces separating Oakley from Clapham and other villages.
5. The open and rural feel of our village characterised by the hedge and tree lined principal roads – the open frontages in the centre of the village and the Village Green.

8.73. These consultation activities made clear that the Oakley Village Landscape Character Assessment reflected the views of Oakley residents when identifying the important landscape features of our village.

ONP LE1: Locally Significant Landscape Areas

New development must not adversely impact on locally significant landscape areas as listed below and identified on map.

To be considered for approval, new development adjacent to locally significant landscape areas must not cause harm, including to hedgerows and hedgerow trees, ecology, flora and fauna, wildlife or views through open landscape.

New development within the setting of locally significant landscape area should contribute to or enhance that setting.

For the purposes of this policy, locally significant landscape areas are:

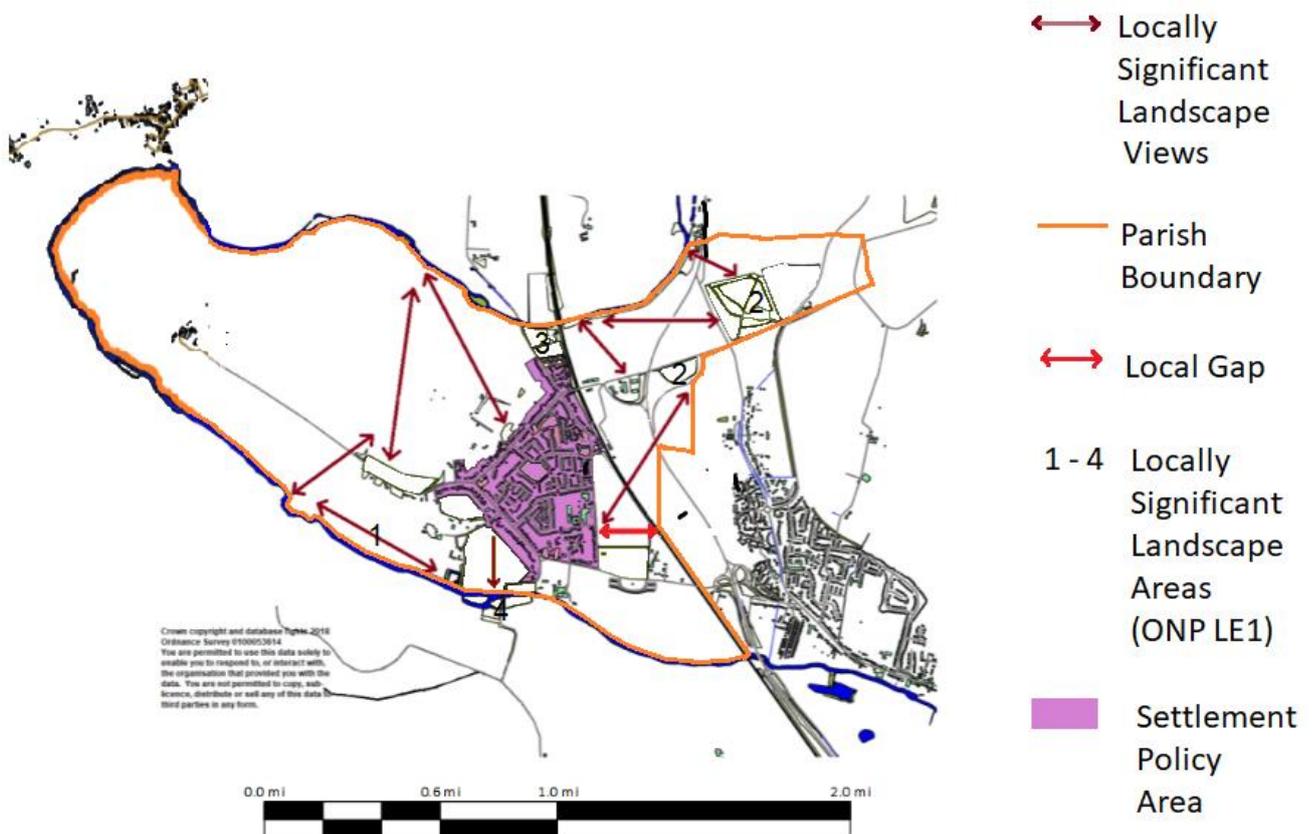
1. **The River Great Ouse and River Valley area;**

2. The woodland areas Browns Wood and Judge's Spinney;
3. The area surrounding Stafford Bridge including Lynch Furlong and the allotments;
4. The Limestone Bridges and surrounding area.

The map below shows the boundaries of these locally significant landscape areas.

Interpretation

- 8.74. The policy is part of the wider sustainable growth strategy for the area, highlighting areas where the open character and quality of landscape must be preserved.
- 8.75. The locally significant landscape areas indicated on the map must remain as open landscape. However, the policy recognises that development outside of but within the setting of these defined areas must also be given careful consideration in terms of environmental impacts.
- 8.76. Whilst Policies ONP HG1, ONP BE1 and ONP BE2 set the general growth strategy, Policy ONP LE1 introduces explicit environmental considerations for the area's most locally significant landscapes.





Map showing locally significant landscape areas, and Oakley – Clapham Local Gap (a definitive map is included in the BBC “Urban Boundary Review” dated July 2013)

ONP LE2: Local Green Space

Designated Local Green Space must remain as open green spaces and the construction of new buildings will be regarded as inappropriate. Exceptionally, a small-scale building such as a shed may be allowed, providing:

- **The open and green character of the space is maintained and not compromised;**
- **The new development comprises facilities to support the community use of space.**
- **The community, wildlife, amenity and other values as a Local Green Space are preserved or enhanced.**

A description and photograph of each of the areas designated as green space is shown under Designated Local Green Spaces section of this plan.

Interpretation

8.77. This policy protects the open character and community value of Local Green Space but does allow specific kinds of small-scale development. Examples of small-scale development that could be allowed include:

- A sports pavilion, to support the use of sports pitches;
- Storage facilities for tools and equipment used for maintaining green space;
- A small refreshment kiosk to support the recreational use of space.

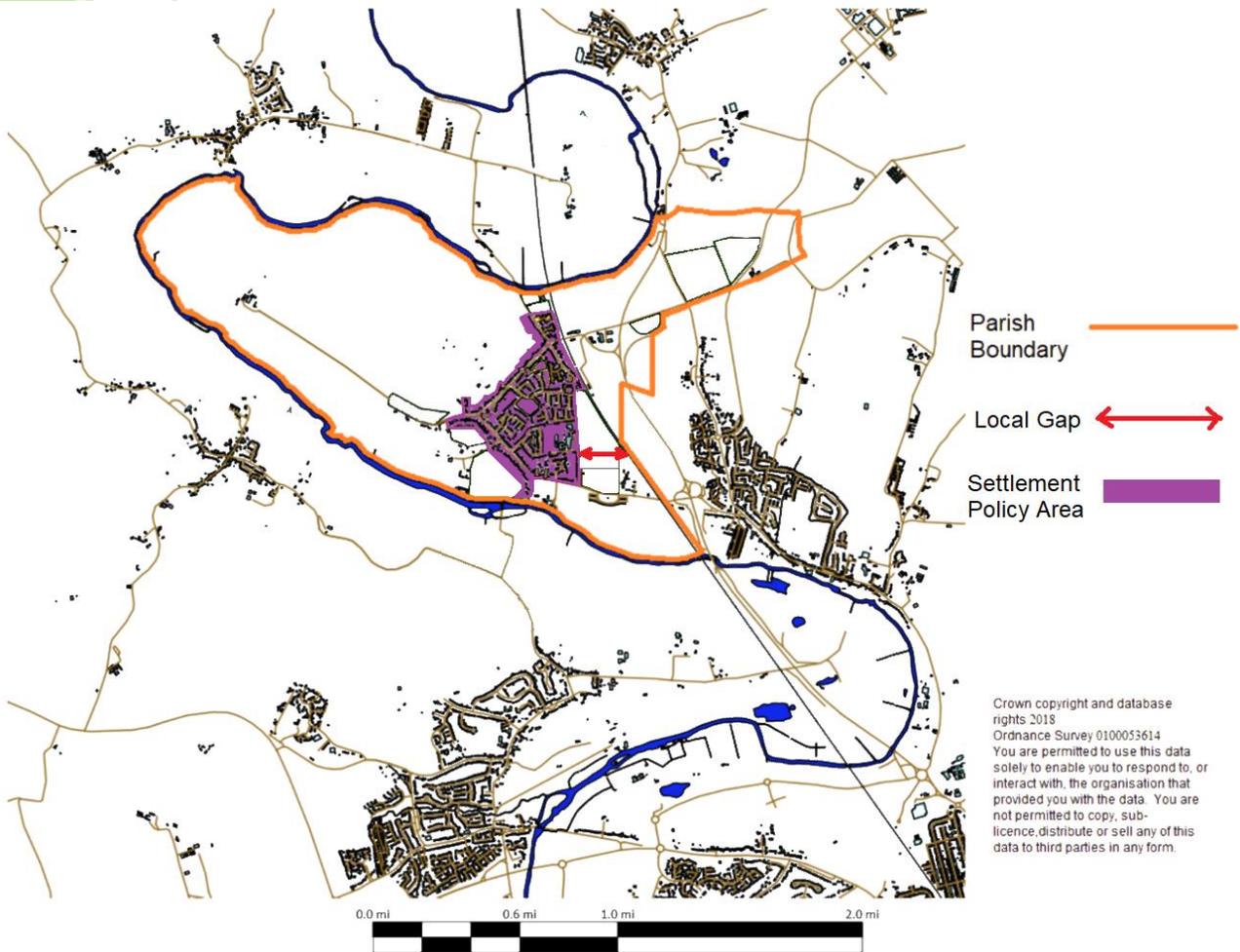
8.78. In addition, the plan conforms to the Bedford Borough statements relating to Anglian Water.

ONP LE3 Coalescence with Neighbouring Villages

New development must not compromise the open character of landscape that provides separation between Oakley village and the village of Clapham.

Interpretation

8.79. This policy ensures that the open landscapes between Oakley and Clapham is maintained. Whilst Policies ONP HG1, ONP BE1 and ONP BE2 set the general growth strategy, Policy ONP LE3 places additional emphasis on the need to avoid urbanisation of the area separating Oakley village and the village of Clapham.



Map showing open landscape between Oakley and neighbouring villages

Design and Heritage

Purpose

- 8.80. To ensure that new development has a sense of place and incorporates sustainable design. To protect historic areas and buildings and their setting.

Planning Rational and Evidence

- 8.81. Paragraphs 124 - 127 of the NPPF 2019 encourage the creation of high quality buildings and places.
- 8.82. Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiation through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly within Oakley which has a distinct and unique character.

8.83. The following policies avoid stylistic prescription. However, Oakley is a distinctive area and it would be inappropriate to impose a generic design solution of off-the-peg houses or a highway-standards-derived layout.

8.84. Instead, the layout and form of the development should be based on a clear urban design and landscape framework. This should be consulted on, prior to detailed design works taking place.

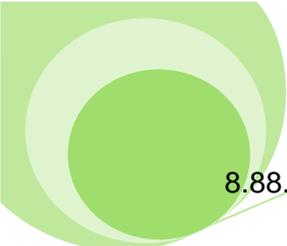


Examples of good design within the village

8.85. The landscape surrounding Oakley is of historical significance. Remnants of an Iron Age village were discovered where the Lovell Homes are now sited. There is still evidence of the medieval 3 Strip farming in Judge's Spinney and in the road names, Church Lane and Westfield Road. All the names of the roads in the developments from the 1960s are taken from the Pre-Enclosure Map of 1798. The Duke of Bedford successfully enclosed the village in 1803 and the 3-field system was abolished for ever. The Duke of Bedford used the Architect Henry Holland in 1803 to build the Grade II* Oakley House. The Duke of Bedford straightened the roads and the village still retains this structure today.

8.86. The area from the church to and including the Oakley Bridges are of importance. St Mary's Church is a grade I listed building and has the scheduled churchyard cross. Rectory Cottage and the river bridges are grade II listed and the site of the mill was here. The next area of note is the Drive, which is the entrance to Oakley House where there are 5 grade II listed properties.

8.87. The Dukes of Bedford from the 1840s to the late 1860s constructed estate cottages for their workers along the High Street and Station Road. These buildings have informed the architectural design of the recent developments. Some are Grade II listed. The Station complex has listed buildings, two of the buildings have been bought back into use. The Pump House at Pavenham Road is testament to the industrial operation of the railway. Eighteen further cottages and houses are listed. The estate in the core of the village is an example of 1960s – 1970s open plan development as are the subsequent estates.



8.88. The four narrow roads have narrow footpaths edged with granite setts. They surround the centre of Oakley village. The buildings of note along the High Street are Middle Farm and the Granary, The Bedford Arms both C17 and the Duke of Bedford cottages built of brick and tiled roofs. The Duke of Bedford Cottages in Station Road are of stone and tiles. The station and the two village schools have grade II listing. The Old School is another Duke of Bedford building, the other attractive development along Lovell Road is the Lovell Homes originally built for retired agricultural workers in the inter war years. Church Lane is a tree lined road with houses set back. Many of the houses have hedges or trees fronting the roads giving an open green ambiance to the village. The feeling is of an open and green village with a variety of house types, which meet the needs of our young and older residents. This was reflected in the results of the questionnaire and the BBC Oakley analysis of census data 2013.

8.89. There are a number of historic buildings; Grade I – St Mary’s Church; Grade II* - Oakley House; Grade II listings are - Oakley Bridge, Church Lane; Rectory Cottage, Church Lane; St Mary’s Cottage, Church Lane; 29 Church Lane; The Mallows and Grooms Cottage, part of Oakley House Stables, The Drive, Church Lane; The Little House, The Drive, Church Lane; Reynes Cottage, The Drive, Church Lane; Maze Cottage, The Drive, Church Lane; Yew Tree Cottage, Westfield Road; The Bedford Arms, High Street; Queens College Farmhouse, High Street; Barn 35 metres northwest of College Farmhouse, High Street; Middle Farmhouse, High Street; Outbuildings and wall 10 metres west of Middle Farm, High Street; 26 and 28, High Street; 27-33 Station Road; Former railway Station offices, Station Road; Goods Shed at Former Railway Station, Station Road; Community Hall, Former School, Lovell Road; Park and garden, Westfield House, Westfield Drive.

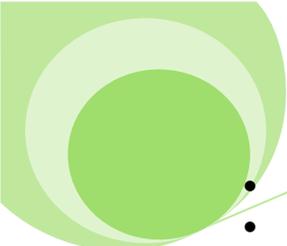
8.90. Scheduled Ancient Monuments – Churchyard Cross in St Marys Church; Oakley Bridge, Church Lane.

8.91. Other buildings of note are the Lovell Homes, Lovell Road; The Duke of Bedford Cottages in the High Street and Station Road; Oakley Memorial, Cross Roads Junction.

ONP DH1: Design

New development should incorporate sustainable urban design. This includes:

- **Complementing and integrating with the local surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing, spacing, urban grain and set-back from street frontages;**
- **designing parking as an integral part of layout, so that it does not dominate the street scene;**
- **providing active frontages to streets and public spaces, so as to provide natural surveillance;**
- **creating attractive, safe, permeable and convenient pedestrian environments;**

- 
- **providing screened bin storage, away from road frontages;**
 - **using permeable materials for hard surfaces.**

Interpretation

- 8.92. Policy ONP DH1 is concerned with sustainable urban design principles. It seeks to promote sustainability by addressing character, local distinctiveness, amenity, safety, types of plants and pedestrian convenience. Analysis of the site and context is an essential part of the design process.
- 8.93. The policy applies to all scales of development, though a proportionate approach is necessary and requirements referring to layout would only apply to development that incorporated new layout.
- 8.94. Active frontages refer to elevations containing windows and doors, so that streets and spaces are overlooked.
- 8.95. Car parking should comprise a mix of garages, driveway space, on-street and other provision. This helps to ensure that the public realm is not dominated by parking.
- 8.96. Separation of public and private space involves layouts where rear gardens are located away from road frontages. This avoids the need for high fencing or walls next to roads, which would create a poor quality public realm.
- 8.97. There is a threat from propagules and seeds of invasive non-native plant species to the European sites downstream (Portholme SAC, The Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar) if there is inappropriate landscape planting.
- 8.98. Design and access statement should make clear how the requirements of this and the following policy have been met.
- 8.99. Planning applications should make clear how NPPF 2019 policy for community engagement has been met, recognising that this is a material consideration. Community engagement should be focused on the pre-design stage, so that the community's knowledge informs the design process. Late stage engagement, focused on narrow and subjective aesthetic matters, offers little opportunity to influence the fundamental characteristics of a scheme.

ONP DH2: Local Character

New development must complement the existing character of the village. This includes:

- **Comprising housing site design brief to complement the character of the village, rather than generic design solutions that fail to respond to local character;**
- **Using high quality and durable materials to complement the existing palette of materials used in the surrounding area;**

- **Retaining existing front hedges and trees;**
- **Designing other boundary treatments to complement the established local character through the use of hedges and limestone walls;**
- **Ensuring development fronting the village green maintains the open character based on front gardens with minimal planting and no fences to the frontages;**
- **Designing extensions to historic buildings to be subordinate to the scale of the original building, whilst complementing the building in terms of quality of materials and finishes.**

Creative, carefully designed, contemporary design solutions are particularly encouraged.

Interpretation

8.100. Policy ONP DH2 deals with local character. The policy is not intended to require stylistic imitation or to stifle creativity. Indeed, imitation can be harmful, in particular in historic locations, where authenticity is important. The policy seeks to ensure that development is specific to the site and context.

8.101. The term 'high quality materials' includes authentic local materials and other materials with a high standard of finish and durability. The normal building materials are brick and tiled roofs. The policy would not be met by imitation traditional materials, such as plastic imitation 'timber' features.

8.102. At all times any new development should enhance and conserve the local character of the village.

8.103. Creative and innovative design solutions are especially encouraged, in particular designs that incorporate low or zero carbon use.

8.104. The use of capable and skilled professional teams is strongly encouraged in order to meet the standards of design required by Policies ONP DH1, ONP DH2 and other policies in this plan.

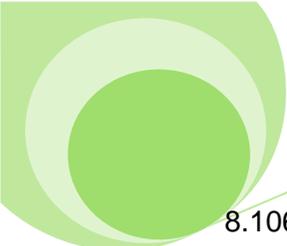
ONP DH3: Local Heritage

The following are designated as local non-designated heritage assets:

- **The Duke of Bedford Cottages in High Street and Station Road;**
- **Oakley War Memorial, junction of High Street and Station Road;**
- **Lovell Homes inter-war memorial houses in Lovell Road.**

Interpretation

8.105. This policy identifies local heritage that is neither listed nor in a conservation area. Alterations to these structures should be designed to complement the architectural and historic character and setting, which should be analysed and understood as part of the design process.



8.106. Policies ONP DH1 and ONP DH2 apply across the neighbourhood area but are especially relevant to application of this policy.

Transport

Purpose

8.107. To create a balanced and sustainable range of transport options in Oakley.

Planning rational & evidence

8.108. Paragraphs 102, 105 and 110 of the NPPF 2019 encourage plans to take account of transport issues.

8.109. For most residents living in the Parish, the car has become the principal mode of transport, even for some of the shortest journeys. Better connectivity and accessibility through footpaths and cycleways will assist in reducing the number of vehicle movements that need to take place within the village.

8.110. Oakley lies at the end of Bedford Cycle route 5 (BRC5). Oakley also lies on the Ouse Valley Bedford cycle route, which links from Oakley to Pavenham and Bromham. There are challenges in terms of improving the cycle connections particularly to Bromham via Church Lane and Oakley Road.

8.111. Key issues for residents are: volume and speed of traffic, congestion and parking, particularly around the post office and schools. Peak times around school drop off and pick up are problematic. There is also the inherent danger of the narrow roads, especially when buses and larger vans are using them.

8.112. An Oakley Development Plan Road Study 2016 supports residents' concerns. This includes the following:

“The older parts of the village naturally have inadequate provision for off-street parking and, other than in Reynes Drive, the street widths on through roads are nowhere up to modern design standards. Reynes Drive, the only 7.4m through road connects the mid-points of the High Street and Station Road and so has little effect in relieving the congestion that builds up during business hours.

Street parking on Reynes Drive, Oakley's widest thoroughfare, is such that, at places in the morning, traffic is confined to one car width, with cars and vans parked on both sides. In the High Street at about 0800 the parking makes the conflicting needs of southbound service buses (routes 50 and 51) with northbound school contract buses (principally Sharnbrook Upper School) clog the street. Later in the day as more parked cars fill the High Street, commercial vehicles cannot pass easily in the High Street and the many metres of all-day parked cars either side of the parking restriction at Lincroft and Oakley Primary



School make two-way traffic in Station Road slow and difficult.

In addition, all through roads have a portion of their length with footways (some narrow) on one side of the road only, this means pedestrians are often forced to cross the road, sometimes near to bends (e.g. Church Lane junction with High St.), to continue their journey”.

8.113. In considering new development, impacts on congestion, parking and safety of both pedestrians and drivers are critical.

8.114. This plan does not seek to modify parking standards, which are currently in the BBC *Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities SPD - 2014 (2.0. Residential Car Parking)*. However, it does seek to provide for alternative and more sustainable forms of transport, such as cycling.

8.115. A main concern for residents is that extra development in the village may cause an increase in congestion due to extra traffic and parking. Of those responding to the questionnaire, 93% stated that traffic volumes were already a major issue and 98% considered that highways had problems with congestion, speeding and maintenance. There was also support (66%) for an urgent upgrade to a joint pedestrian and cycle path to Clapham.

ONP TR1: Balanced Transport Provision

New development must contribute to a balanced transport provision, including:

- **giving priority to the needs and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists in the layout of new roads and paths;**
- **supporting improvement of the cycle/pedestrian link from Oakley to Clapham and Bedford;**
- **providing secure, weatherproof and convenient facilities for storage of cycles.**

Particular attention will be paid to impacts of development on road capacity, congestion and safety, in particular avoiding adverse impacts on:

- **narrow roads;**
- **roads with only one footway;**
- **Ouse Valley Bedford cycle route to Pavenham and Bromham;**
- **roads around the schools and post-office.**

The contribution of the network of narrower roads to the character of Oakley must be taken into account. Highway expansion to increase capacity and accommodate development must only take place where it would not cause significant harm to the character of Oakley.

Interpretation

8.116. The policy seeks to ensure that a range of transport options is provided, rather than over-reliance of motor vehicles. Oakley lies at the end of Bedford Cycle

route 5 (BRC5). Oakley also lies on the Ouse Valley Bedford cycle route, which links from Oakley to Pavenham and Bromham.

8.117. The limitations of the local highway network are recognised by the policy, especially the preponderance of narrow roads, some without footpaths on one or both sides.

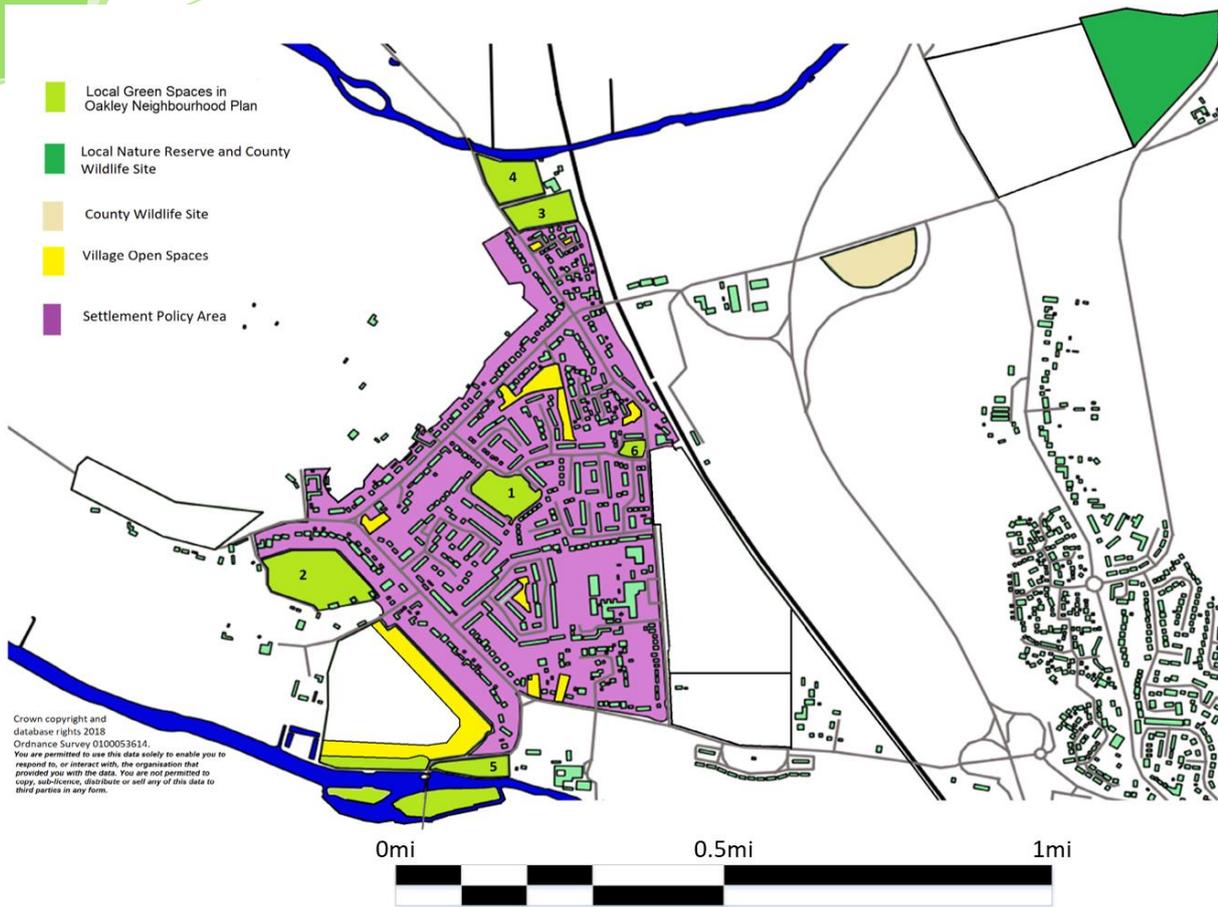
8.118. Whilst such limitations affect capacity, they are also part of the character of the area, and this character could be harmed by insensitive highway works. The policy requires a balanced approach, recognising the importance of conserving character.



Twin-bridges over the river Great Ouse in Oakley

9. Neighbourhood Plan Designated Local Green Spaces

- 9.1. This neighbourhood plan designates Local Green Spaces (LGS). These designations meet the criteria contained in paragraph 100 of the NPPF 2019.
- 9.2. Oakley has a number of Village Open Spaces already designated under the Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2013). These spaces are protected under Policy AD40 which prevents development on them, unless the reasons for designation are not compromised or other material considerations outweigh the need to retain the Village Open Space or View undeveloped.
- 9.3. One of these spaces (Browns Wood) is a Local Nature Reserve and another (Judge's Spinney) is a County Wildlife Site, so neither of these have been included as Local Green Spaces (LGS). Of the remaining spaces, six were considered to meet the necessary criteria to be designated LGS, as identified under Paragraph 100 of the NPPF 2019.
- 9.4. Five of these spaces have been incorporated into one LGS, namely 'Open Space Islands Along and Adjoining the River', with a total of six spaces allocated as LGS.
- 9.5. To ensure local involvement and to help identify community value, local people were asked for their views on the importance of these spaces to the community, as part of an exhibition and questionnaire. These views have been taken into account whilst applying the NPPF 2019 criteria. An indication of local people's support for each LGS is included in the scripts.



9.6. Five of the six areas designated as Local Green Spaces under this neighbourhood plan were confirmed by Bedford Borough Council as having met the NPPF 2019 criteria for LGS. These are as follows:

1) Site Number 150 - Village Green

Situated in the middle of the village, the village green is one of the most popular recreational facilities in the village. Containing a children’s play area as well as a multi-sports area and an outdoor table tennis table, it is in almost constant use. Whilst being used by people of all ages, it is particularly popular with young people and young families who use it as a place to relax and to play sport such as basketball, football and cricket. The importance of this space to local residents is shown in the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, October 2015, where 73% of residents responded that this is an important/very important local space.



2) Site Number 151 – Recreation Ground

This land has been used as a sports field since the mid-20th century and is used by a large proportion of local village residents for a variety of community events ranging from quiz evenings to firework displays. It houses a very active clubhouse which has a children's playground and is regularly used by the local community as a meeting place. The ground is used for a variety of sports, including cricket and football, and is used by the AFC Oakley Football team and the Pilgrims Cricket Club. It has a tennis court, which can also be used for Basketball, and a Boules Pitch. It is also the location of Oakley Motorcycle Club which has nearly 500 members. Due to its very nature, the recreational facility is accessible to the public and it is extremely valuable to the local community for sport, recreation and as an amenity space. A total of 71% of local residents believed that it is important/very important that this space is a LGS.



3) Site Number 156 - Allotment site

The importance of allotments in terms of sustainability, developing a sense of community and community cohesion, is recognised by Bedford Borough Council. Their “Open Space Supplementary Planning Document September 2013” details a requirement for allotment space to be provided of at a rate of 0.35ha per 1,000 people. This land has historically been used for allotments providing the only such allocations within the village boundary. A total of 69% of local residents indicated that this should be a LGS.



4) Site Number 157 - Linch Furlong

Linch Furlong Nature Reserve is a community resource regularly used by walkers and picnickers, including young families, contributing to their health and wellbeing. It is a tranquil spot by the River Great Ouse enjoyed both by people and the wildlife that inhabit it. A





wide variety of trees have been planted and the hedges and land sensitively managed to benefit birds and encourage wildflowers. An artificial otter holt has been installed in the river bank to allow the animals to “stay over” safely. Willow trees along the river side have been pollarded to encourage healthy growth and bird and bat boxes installed. A total of 67% of local residents believed that this space should be a LGS.

5) Site Number 153 - Open space islands along and adjoining the river

This site provides iconic views of the listed parish church and contributes to the rural and open setting of both the church and the historic limestone Oakley Two Bridges. The land is maintained by Oakley Parish Council as a public access area and is regularly used by local residents for recreation. These



strips of land are either partially or entirely within the flood plain of the River Great Ouse and incorporate the Oakley weir and the remains of an old mill which once stood on a site near the two bridges. A total of 74% of local residents felt that it is important/very important that this space is a LGS.

The remaining areas designated as Local Green Spaces under this neighbourhood plan is listed below.

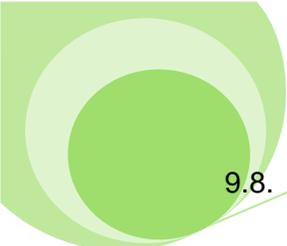
6) Site No. 154 – Grange Close, Station Road Green

This small green provides an extremely important recreational space in the setting of an award-winning housing scheme. Situated at the heart of the village, it provides a relief to the built area of Grange Close and Reynes Drive whilst also providing an “open” feel to this part of the village and a break in the frontage of housing along the west side of Station



Road. The importance of this space to local residents is shown in the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, October 2015, where 70% of residents responded that this is an important/very important local space.

- 9.7. A detailed report, Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space assessment February 2018, supporting the sites selected and produced by consultants Urban Vision is available - see Annex 3.



9.8. Of the Village Open Spaces included under the Allocations and Designations Plan (2013), seven have not been included as LGS. These sites are still protected under Policy AD40, as explained above, and are as follows:

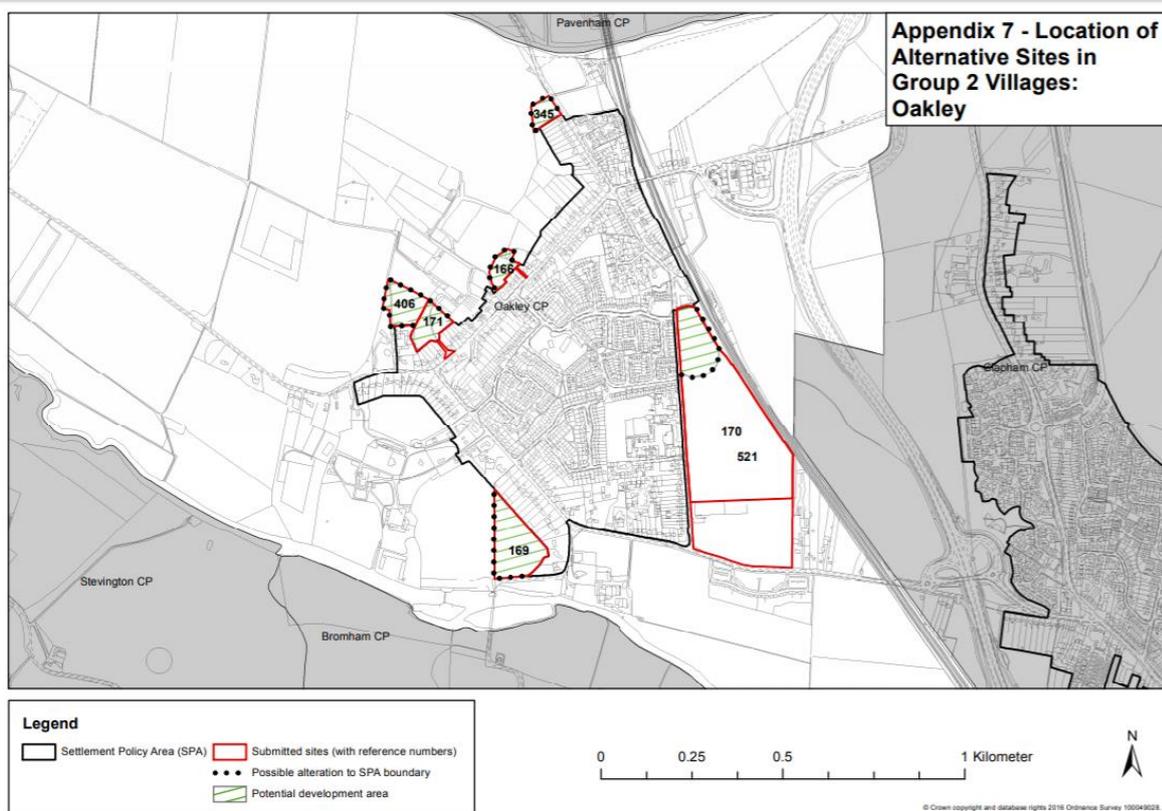
- Land next to Bedford Arms pub
- Garden of Middle Farm, on High Street
- Paddock next to Middle Farm, on High Street
- Strip of land between the Paddock next to Middle Farm and Reynes Drive
- Open green space next to Ruffs Furze
- The two strips of land off Lovell Road, opposite College Farm
- The two open spaces located in the Furlong

9.9. The boundaries of these spaces are also included on the above map for information.

10. Proposed Development Sites

Introduction

10.1. Following initial assessment by Bedford Borough Council a number of “Call for Sites” submissions were considered suitable for further assessment as to their suitability for residential development. Each of the sites identified by the Borough have been assessed again in the preparation of this neighbourhood plan both individually but also in the context of the wider challenges facing the village. The outcome of these assessments can be found on the website – see Annex 3 for details. In addition, a more detailed assessment for each site can be found in Urban Vision’s Oakley site assessments report – see Annexe 3.

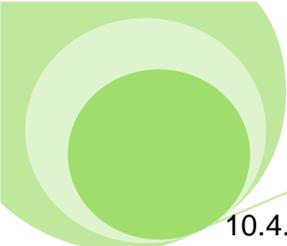


Map showing sites – extract from Bedford Borough Council site assessment document.

Development Sites Selected

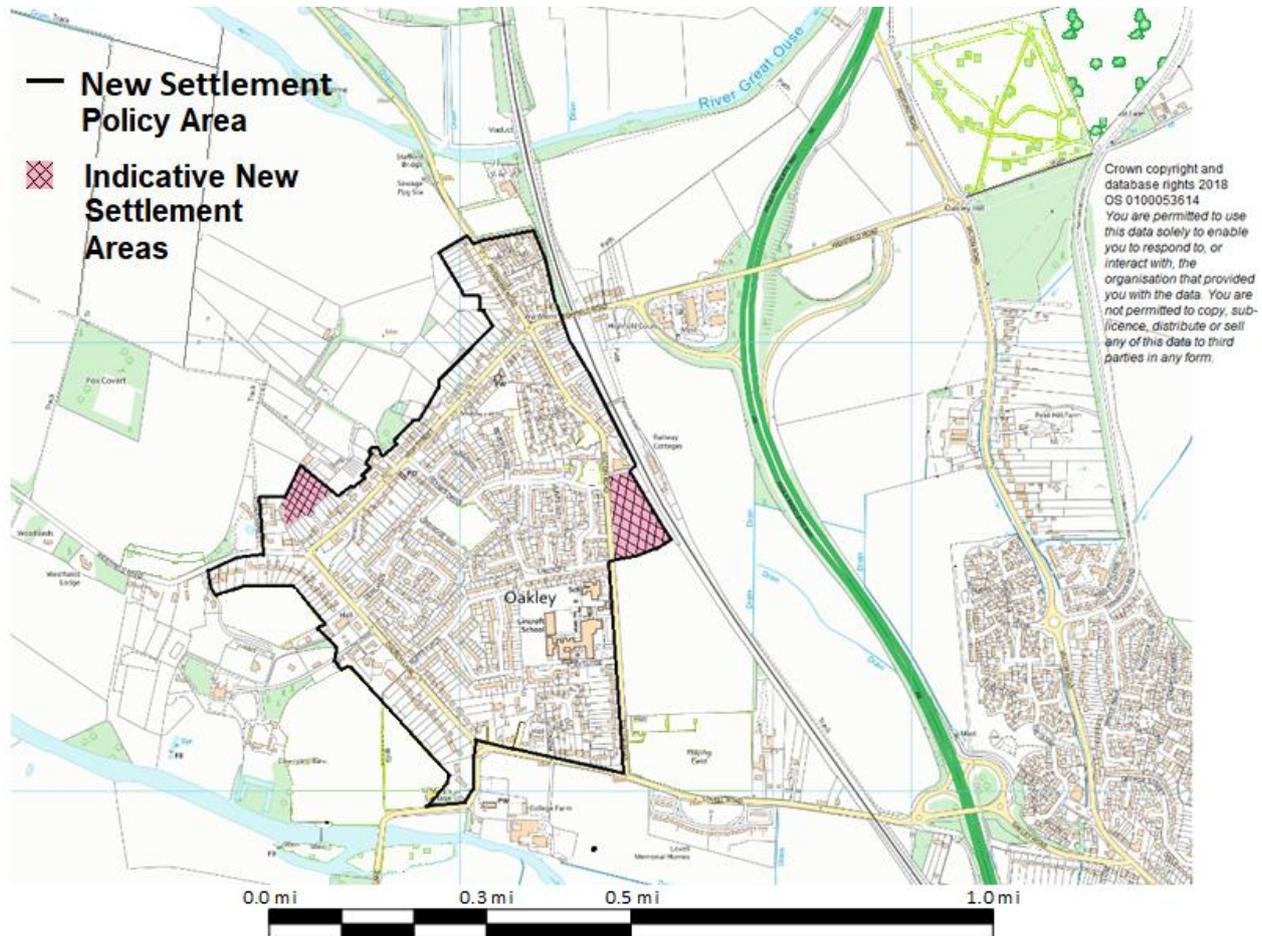
10.2. The developers for the three sites recommended by the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group for further consideration were invited to present a draft masterplan of their proposal to a joint meeting of members from the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. All three developers supplied masterplan information, but only two presented to the meeting.

10.3. Following the presentation by developers the full Parish Council, at their meeting on 1st May 2018, considered the three developments as to which site(s) best met Oakley’s needs.

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- 10.4. The Parish Council decided that to alleviate additional traffic issues, take account of consultation feedback about small developments and acknowledging the comments made by Urban Vision consultants, that a two-site approach would be taken.
 - 10.5. It was therefore agreed that site 171 rear of High Street – up to 20 dwellings and site 170 Station Road (northern part only) – up to 30 dwellings would be their choice of development sites for the neighbourhood plan. The development of each site will accord with the Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Highways Assessment and the Habitat Regulation Assessment; which will need to ensure that hydrological impacts are checked and there is adequate mitigation, if required. They will be required to follow the criteria of the BBC Local Plan and the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan policies of Landscape, Green Spaces, Housing and Transport.
 - 10.6. Following the 6-week statutory consultation period a number of concerns were raised for both sites. The Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group reviewed these concerns and concluded that site 171 rear of High Street would be best served by no more than 10 dwellings. The landowner's agent agreed to this request and provided an indicative plan of 10 dwellings with a mixture of single storey and two-story houses. The decision to reduce site 171 to a maximum of 10 dwellings was endorsed by the Parish Council at their meeting of 5th March 2019. The Station Road site 170 (northern part only) remains unchanged at a maximum of 30 dwellings. In addition, a site-specific brief has been produced for each site which clarifies how the policies relate to that site and will be used by planning officers and developers at the planning application stage. See Annex 4 for details.
 - 10.7. The Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group have, by making a balanced assessment of the sites always recognised the impact on individual residents. Their judgement was based on what the residents told us, the planning system from government, the impact on individual residents and the impact on the whole village.
 - 10.8. The Parish Council will support these sites, when submitted to Bedford Borough Council to obtain planning permission, subject to the development proposals aligning with the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan and statements made at the presentation on 26th April 2018 being effected.

11. Settlement Policy Area (SPA)

11.1. To accommodate the new developments of up to 10 dwellings - off High St and up to 30 dwellings - off Station Rd the Settlement Policy Area for the Parish of Oakley will be formally changed as part of this neighbourhood plan (see map below).



Map showing additional areas to be included within the Oakley Settlement Policy Area.

Annex 1 - Non-Neighbourhood Plan Matters

1. This part of the document is not part of the statutory neighbourhood plan. It has not been subject to independent examination and referendum. The following are issues and actions raised during the neighbourhood plan process, but that need to be addressed by other means.

Road Signage and Lighting

2. Discussions will take place with the local highways authority with regard to:
 - Removal and simplification of excessive signage and street clutter.
 - Use of street lighting of higher design quality.

Links to other areas

3. We will look for opportunities to improve footpath links to surrounding areas.

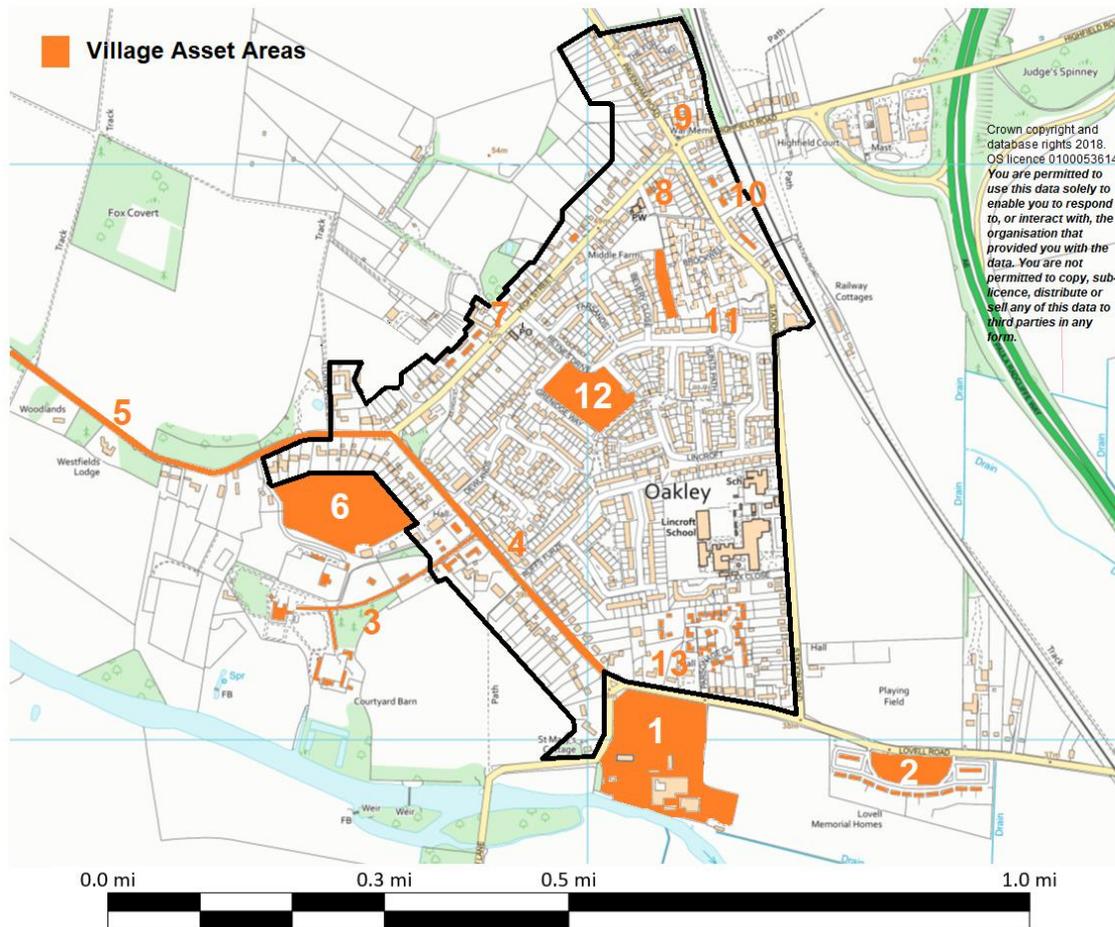
Article 4 Direction

4. The local planning authority will be contacted about updating Article 4 Directions, and discussing the potential for an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for front walls and fences for properties fronting the village green and the roads in the wider 1970s housing estate.

Enhancement Projects

5. As well as conserving the identity of the village, there is a clear need to enhance access to local attractions, as stated by BBLCA (3B.1.27), 'Enhance access and recreation including new river crossings, links with parks, nature reserves and local attractions'. We will look for opportunities to secure such improvements.
6. Specifically, the following areas should be considered when considering how the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money gained from developers should be spent:
 - Provide pedestrian access across the river, near to the 'two bridges'.
 - Both Judge's Spinney and Browns Wood are underused as village attractions since they cannot be easily accessed on foot from the village. The use of these attractions could be significantly increased through the introduction of an access path along Highfield Road up to Browns Wood.
 - Upgrade to a joint pedestrian and cycle path to Clapham.

Annex 2 – Map of Village Assets



List of Village Assets Designated by Oakley Neighbourhood Plan

1. Area of College Farm, St Marys Church and Oakley Twin Bridges
2. Lovell Homes
3. Area of Oakley House and the Drive
4. Wooded character of Church Lane
5. Westfield Farm and Westfield Road
6. Sports Field and Village Hall
7. Duke of Bedford Cottages and Regiment Cottages, High Street
8. Methodist Church
9. Oakley War Memorial
10. Duke of Bedford Cottages, Station Road
11. Open area in Brockwell
12. The open aspect of the 1970s Houses in the core of the village
13. The open aspect of Parsonage Close



Annex 3 - Oakley Neighbourhood Plan List of documents and reports referred to in the plan.

All available from Oakley Neighbourhood Development Plan website located at:
oakleyvillage.co.uk/ndp

Supporting Reports

Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space assessment February 2018 –
*Completed by consultants Urban Vision - **LGS report 2018***

Oakley Landscape Character Assessment – *Completed by Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group - **Oakley Landscape Character Assessment***

Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessments report – *Completed by consultants Urban Vision - **UVE Oakley site assessments report***

Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Proposed Development Sites Assessment – *Completed by Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – **ONDP Proposed Development Sites (sept18).docx***

ONDP Survey (questionnaire) summary report 2016 – *Completed by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity - **ONDP _survey (questionnaire)_report_Oakley_2016-1.docx***

ONDP Housing Needs Survey reports 2015/16 - *Completed by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity - **HNS report Oakley March 2016.docx** and **Oakley HNS December 2015.doc***

ONDP Oakley Road Study 2016 - *Completed by J A C Edwards MA CEng FICE - **ONDP Oakley Road Study 2016.doc***

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – *Completed by Oakley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of Oakley Parish Council – **Oakley NP SEA screening (Feb 2019) v1.pdf***

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) – *Completed by Dr.P.D.Carey, Bodsey Ecology Limited – **Habitat Regulations Assessment for Oakley Neighbourhood Plan (002).pdf***

Other Reports

Business Study
BBC site assessment report
BBC Local Green Space report



Annex 4 - Oakley Neighbourhood Plan – Housing Site Design Brief for sites 170 & 171.

Housing Site Design Brief Site 170

The general design policy applies as a separate policy.

Site – Northern End of the Field, Station Road opposite Reynes Drive.

Housing Mix

The housing development must include a balanced mix of house types to meet local need.

Developer must justify the mix of housing in any planning application, based on evidence of local need.

The mix should include 1 and 2 bedrooms housing to meet the needs of first-time buyers and those wishing to down size. This includes at least one house of 1 and 2 bedrooms per 5 houses.

It should include mobility housing as per the Draft BBC Local Plan 2030.

Design

The houses surrounding the site are detached, semi-detached and terraced. All the houses should be of a scale, height, mass and spacing that complement Grange Close and the Duke of Bedford houses further along Station Road.

Parking should be integral to the layout of each dwelling.

Use permeable materials for all hard surfaces.

Provide active frontages to streets and public spaces for safety.

Provide attractive, safe, permeable and convenient pedestrian environments.

Provide screened bin storage, away from frontages.

Local Character

Provide site specific design that complements Grange Close and the Duke of Bedford Houses further along Station Road.

Use high quality and authentic materials that complement Grange Close.

The boundary fronting Station Road should have hedges to reflect the hedging along Station Road.



Design other boundaries with hedges;

- between the development and the rest of the field, and
- between the railway line and the development.

This is for noise reduction from the railway and the Clapham Bypass and to retain the character of Oakley.

Transport

Give priority to the needs and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists in the layout of new roads and paths in the site.

Provide secure, weatherproof and convenient facilities for the storage of cycles.

The development must avoid adverse impact on the narrow road of Station Road.

Must avoid adverse impact on the junction with Station Road and Reynes Drive.

Provide a safe access to the schools.

Provide a footpath along the Station Road frontage.

Provide a safe crossing on Station Road to access the schools and the centre of the village.

Sustainability

The pedestrian route to the shop, Village Green, the churches, the sports ground and the schools must be safely accessible from the site.

Housing Site Design Brief - Site 171

The general design policy applies as a separate policy.

Site - Rear of High Street, opposite the Bedford Arms.

Housing Mix

Housing developments of 5 houses or more must include a balanced mix of housing. The mix of housing should include 1 and 2 bedroom housing to meet the wish of those wishing to downsize.

It should include mobility housing as per the Draft Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030.

Design



The houses surrounding the site are detached. All the houses should be of a scale, height, mass and spacing that complement the houses at the western end of the High Street and Westfield Road including Town Farm Court.

Parking should be integral to the layout of each house.

Use permeable materials for hard services.

Provide active frontages to streets and public spaces for safety.

Provide attractive, safe, permeable and convenient pedestrian environments.

Provide screened bin storage, away from the road frontages.

Local Character

Provide site specific design that complements the western end of the High Street and Town Farm Court. Not generic design solutions.

Use high quality and authentic materials that complement the western edge of the High Street and Town Farm Court.

Preserve the setting of the Grade II listed Bedford Arms.

Undertake an ecological survey of the site.

Retain existing hedges.

The boundary of the access road to the site should either have hedgerow or stone walling to reflect the western end of the High Street.

Transport

Give priority to the needs and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists in the layout of new roads and paths in the site.

Provide secure, weatherproof and convenient facilities for the storage of cycles. The development must avoid adverse impact on the narrow road at the western edge of the High Street and right-angled bend between the High Street and Church Lane.

Sustainability

The pedestrian route along the High Street to the shop, village green and the schools should be accessible from the site.

The pedestrian route to Church Lane must include a safe crossing to the church, Village hall and the Sports Ground.