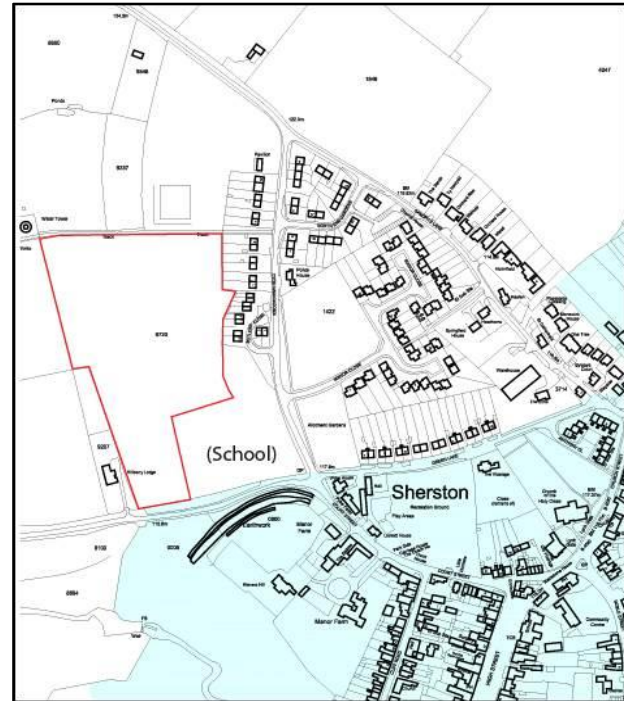




**LRM**  
PLANNING  
LIMITED



# LAND AT UPPER STANBRIDGE FARM, SHERSTON

Site Appraisal

Prepared by LRM Planning Limited on behalf of  
Acorn Property group

September 2017



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# 1. Introduction

## **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Acorn Property Group in order to inform the preparation of the Sherston Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan. It outlines the proposed development of land at Upper Stanbridge Farm, Sherston, identifies the key factors that will need to be taken into account in order for the site to be developed and assesses the site against a number of key sustainability criteria.
- 1.2 The report is intended to provide the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with confidence that the site is suitable for allocation.
- 1.3 It is important to note that proposals for the site are only at their initial stages and as such are indicative. The details of any scheme for the site will be further refined through the neighbourhood planning process and as part of any planning application in the future.
- 1.4 This document:
  - Provides some background context of the site;
  - Considers the constraints that will influence the development of the site;
  - Outlines the proposals for development;
  - Assesses the site against a number of sustainability objectives; and
  - Provides a conclusion and recommends some next steps.

## **Neighbourhood Planning**

- 1.5 The concept of Neighbourhood Planning was first formally introduced under the Localism Act (2011), by the coalition Government. Its purpose is to give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their area and to decide where development should be located. The Neighbourhood Plan process now forms part of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 1.6 A neighbourhood plan should support the strategic development needs set out in the higher tier development plan document (in the case of Sherston, the Wiltshire Core Strategy) and plan positively to meet development pressures.
- 1.7 On adoption, a neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as a Local Plan and will become part of the statutory development plan and applications will be assessed against it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 1.8 The preparation of neighbourhood plans can be broadly summarised as being:
  - Designating a neighbourhood area;



- Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan;
  - Pre-submission publicity and consultation;
  - The submission of the plan to the Local Authority;
  - Independent Examination; and
  - Referendum.
- 1.9 The Plan will be 'made' if more than 50% of residents who vote in the referendum support the plan.
- 1.10 During the preparation of a plan, the steering group (residents who prepare the plan) will need to ensure that it meets the 'basic conditions'. Whether the plan meets the basic conditions or not will be the focus of the Independent Examination. The basic conditions are:
- Having regard to national planning policy and other guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
  - Having special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed buildings or their setting, or any features or special architectural or historic interest;
  - Having special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation areas;
  - Whether the plan contributes to achieving sustainable development;
  - Whether the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within the Development Plan; and
  - Whether the plan does not breach EU obligations.
- 1.11 Each of the above conditions will need to be met in order for the proposed site to be included as an allocation in the final Neighbourhood Development Plan.



## 2. Site Description

### Site Context

- 2.1 This c.3.5ha greenfield site is located on the western edge of Sherston (Wiltshire Council) and outside the existing settlement framework. The site is divided for development purposes into two sections; the northern land parcel (c.2.2ha) and the southern land parcel (1.3ha).
- 2.2 The site slopes from the north to the south and is currently being used for agricultural purposes (arable farming). The boundaries of the site are defined by: a mature hedgerow, which appears to be c.2m in height to the west; a shorter hedgerow and gate to the south; post and rail fencing to the east with shrub planting in the north east; and a less mature hedgerow to the north.
- 2.3 Given the fields current arable farming use, there do not appear to be any hedgerow features dividing the site into smaller field parcels.
- 2.4 Beyond the hedgerow boundary features, Green Lane defines the southern boundaries, with open countryside to the north and west (although a single dwelling is also located to the west of the southern land parcel). The village is located to the east and south east of the subject site and therefore built development abuts the site in these directions. Sherston Primary School is located immediately to the south east, whilst a water tower is located to the north west.

### Access

- 2.5 There is an existing access on the southern and eastern boundaries of the site, from Green Lane and Saxon Close respectively.
- 2.6 A track defines the northern extent of the site, which runs in a west to east direction, from the water tower to Knockdown Road. The access onto Knockdown Road appears to be fairly narrow and may not be suitable to provide a vehicle access to serve the proposed development.
- 2.7 There is also a public right of way located along the western boundary of the site.

### Planning History

- 2.8 From the Council's online planning application database, it doesn't appear that there is any planning history associated with the subject site.

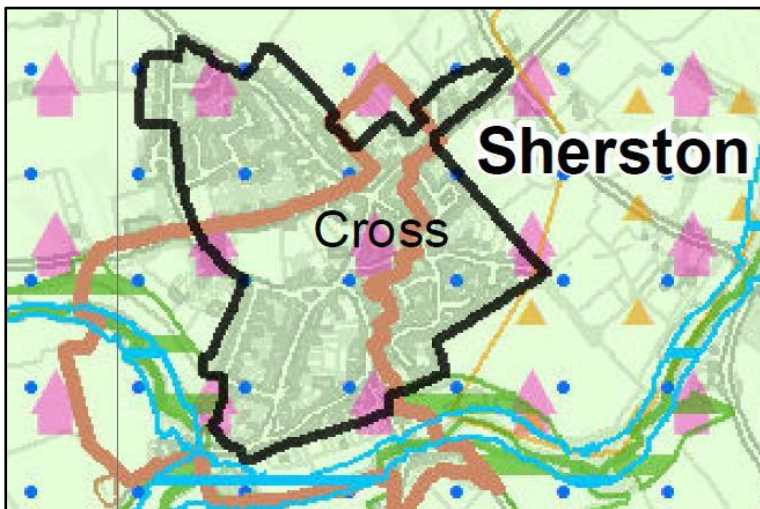


## 3. Constraints

### Overview

- 3.1 There are a number of existing constraints that need to be taken into account when considering the potential development of the site.
- 3.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, all applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.3 Relevant to the development proposals, the Development Plan for Wiltshire Council currently comprises the following documents:
  - The Wiltshire Core Strategy; and
  - Saved Policy from the North Wiltshire Local Plan.
- 3.4 A summary of the relevant policy contained within each document is provided below.
- 3.5 The Core Strategy for Wiltshire, which was their first DPD was adopted in January 2015. It provides the strategic planning policy framework for the Unitary Authority for the period up to 2026. The DPD does not provide detailed development management policy.
- 3.6 The Development Plan's land use designations for Wiltshire are identified on the Community Areas and Inset Maps. The Malmesbury Community Area Map indicates that the subject site is located outside the settlement framework and is therefore within the open countryside (please refer to the Plan below). The Plan also shows the site as falling within a 40% affordable housing zone, subject to viability considerations.

### Core Strategy Map – Sherston





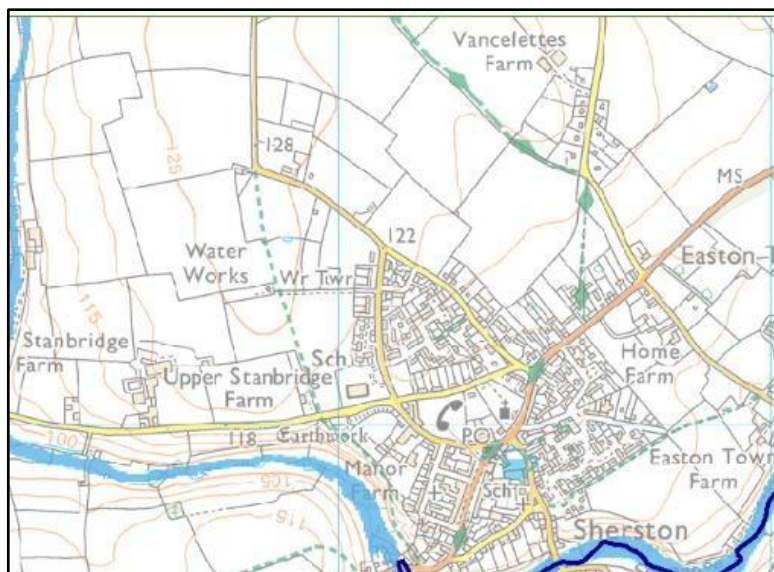
- 3.7 As indicated above, Sherston is located within the Malmesbury Strategy Area. Para. 5.70 of the Core Strategy describes this area as being predominately rural in character and includes parts of the Cotswolds AONB, such as the subject site.
- 3.8 Figure 5.8 of the Core Strategy identifies Sherston as being a large village within the Strategy Area. Its status as a large village is confirmed within Core Policy 13. Core Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy) outlines that large villages have a limited range of employment, services and facilities. In line with Core Policy 1, development in large villages will be limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of the settlement, to improve employment opportunities, services and facilities.
- 3.9 As the site is located outside the adopted settlement framework for Sherston, Core Policy 2 is of relevance. Inter alia it states that only limited forms of development will be permitted outside the defined settlement limits, including:
- Additional employment land;
  - Military establishments;
  - Development related to tourism;
  - Rural exception sites;
  - Specialist accommodation provision; and
  - Development related to rural life.
- 3.10 It should be noted that the above policy would not preclude a neighbourhood plan bringing forward development that was not covered by the criteria listed.
- 3.11 In terms of housing, Policy Core Policy 2 (Delivery Strategy) seeks the provision of approximately 42,000 dwellings between 2006 and 2026. The Policy seeks to prioritise the reuse of previously developed land, but acknowledges the need for greenfield release.
- 3.12 Core Policy 13 confirms that approximately 1,395 new homes should be built within the Malmesbury Community Area, of which 885 should be focused at Malmesbury, which is identified as being the primary settlement. The residual requirement (510 dwellings), will be provided within the rest of the Community Area, including at Sherston.
- 3.13 In terms of affordable housing, Core Policy 43 outlines two affordable housing bandings. The subject site is located in an area where the policy requirement is 40% (net) on site. Only in exceptional circumstances, where it can be proven that on-site delivery is not possible, will a commuted sum be considered. However, the policy also indicates that the provision of affordable housing may vary on a site-by-site basis taking account evidence of local need, mix of affordable housing proposed and the viability of the proposed development.
- 3.14 Core Policy 45 states that the size and type of housing proposed in developments should reflect the demonstrable need within the community within which it is located.
- 3.15 Core Policy 44 permits, in certain circumstances, the provision of affordable housing outside



existing settlement limits.

- 3.16 As the site is located in the Cotswolds AONB, Core Policy 51 (Landscape) is relevant. The policy seeks to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character. Any negative impacts should be mitigated through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals for development affecting AONBs should demonstrate how they have taken into account the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans.
- 3.17 The site is not in an area that is subject to any wildlife designations. There are hedgerows bordering the site and these may be of biodiversity value. There are also a number of mature trees within the existing hedgerows. The majority of the site is in agricultural use and as such is highly unlikely to be of ecological value.
- 3.18 The site is outside of the Sherston Conservation Area to the south east. Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment) is therefore of relevance and development should seek to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.
- 3.19 The impact of the proposed development on the Conservation Area should be considered through any planning application. A desk-based assessment would be required to inform on any below-ground archaeological remains.
- 3.20 There is a water main that crosses the site from the south east to the north west. It is not possible build above the existing water main. Its location must therefore be taken into account when planning the development layout. It is possible to relocate the water main, but this could only be done at significant cost.
- 3.21 According to the Environment Agency, the site isn't at risk of flooding and is located within Flood Zone 1. It is therefore suitable for residential development (please see the Environment Agency Map below).

#### Environment Agency Flood Map







## 4. Development Proposals

4.1 The development would include:

- Up to 45 homes incorporating a mix of property types, including a proportion of affordable housing;
- A new GP surgery;
- An extension to the primary school car park; and
- An area to the west of the primary school for future expansion.

4.2 The final layout of the development will be influenced by a number of factors including landscape impact, constraints such as the existing water main and the final level of development proposed.

4.3 An indicative layout will be prepared at the earliest opportunity and shared with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.



## 5. Sustainable Development Objectives

- 5.1 As set out in Section 1, in order to be considered as a suitable site for allocation in the Neighbourhood Development Plan the site will need to meet the basic conditions.
- 5.2 This Section assesses the proposed development against sustainable development objectives formed by LRM Planning. The objectives have been formed having regard to sustainable development objectives in other Neighbourhood Plans and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Sustainable Development and the National Planning Policy Framework**

- 5.3 Paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework outlines that there are three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The NPPF suggests that these dimensions give rise for the planning system to perform a number of roles, including:
- An economic role – contributing to building a strong and responsive economy. The planning system should ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time.
  - A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The planning system should provide an adequate quantum of housing to meet the needs of the present and future generations. There is also a need to create high quality built environment with accessible local services, reflecting the community's needs and to support the community's health, social and cultural well-being.
  - An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. The planning system should also improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and move to a low carbon economy.
- 5.4 Paragraph 6 of the NPPF outlines that the policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of the document taken as a whole, constitute what the Government's views on sustainable development means in practice for the planning system in England.
- 5.5 The NPPF also outlines that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements to the built, natural and historic environment, as well as to people lives (para. 9 refers). This could include:
- Making it easier for jobs to be created;
  - Moving from a net loss in biodiversity to achieving net-gains for nature;
  - Replacing poor design with better design;
  - Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and
  - Widening the choice of high quality homes.



5.6 The 12 principles of the planning system are outlined in para. 17 of the NPPF.

## **LRM Planning's Sustainable Development Objectives**

5.7 Having regard to the NPPF and other neighbourhood plans, LRM Planning have identified a number of sustainability objectives within each of the 3 dimensions of sustainable development in order to assess the sustainability of the development proposal. These include:

### **Environmental**

- Impact on the Countryside;
- To retain the distinctiveness of Sherston;
- To retain and enhance biodiversity in the Parish;
- To seek high quality design; and
- To conserve and retain heritage assets.

### **Economic**

- To facilitate employment opportunities in the Parish.

### **Social**

- To meet the housing needs of all the community;
- To meet the healthcare, social and cultural needs of all the community;
- To locate development in areas with good public transport, walking and cycling access to Sherston village centre and larger settlements;
- To locate development in a close proximity to services and facilities; and
- To promote mixed use developments.

5.8 An assessment of the proposed development against each sustainable development objective is provided below.

## **Environmental**

### **Impact on the Countryside**

5.9 The proposed development would be located immediately adjacent to the western boundary of Sherston. It would be adjacent to existing residential development and the primary school.

5.10 The Steering Group have carried out an assessment of potential development sites at Sherston. The results of the assessment recognise that in order to meet the local need for new homes and a site for the GP surgery, it will be necessary to develop existing greenfield areas. Whilst there will be an impact upon the countryside, the proposed development can



be designed in a manner that seeks to reduce that impact and is sensitive to the rural location.

5.11 As the site is within the Cotswolds located in the Cotswolds AONB any negative impacts of the proposed development will need to be mitigated through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals for development affecting AONBs should demonstrate how they have taken into account the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans.

5.12 It is important to note that as all of Sherston and its rural hinterland fall within the AONB. There is recognition that greenfield site(s) will need to be developed in order to meet the community's need for new homes and other development such as the GP surgery in full. It follows that any site that is developed in order to meet these needs will have an impact on the AONB and surrounding countryside.

**To retain the distinctiveness of Sherston**

5.13 The Steering Group have identified several 'Areas of a Distinctive Character' in Sherston:

- Village Hall Field;
- Recreation Ground;
- Allotments; and
- River Valleys.

5.14 The proposed site is outside of these areas which have been identified for protection from future development. The site is also outside of the Sherston Conservation Area. Subject to the final scheme reflecting the local vernacular and principles of good design, it will be possible to develop the site in a manner that retains the distinctive character of Sherston.

**To retain and enhance biodiversity in the Parish**

5.15 Whilst the site does not hold any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations, an initial ecological appraisal of the site will be required in order to establish the baseline conditions. That assessment, along with any further species-specific surveys that may be required, will provided a number of recommendations that will need to be taken into consideration when forming the design of the proposed development. The majority of the site is in agricultural use and as such is highly unlikely to be of ecological value.

**To seek high quality design**

5.16 The site will be developed in accordance with national and local planning policies seeking the delivery of high quality design. The developer of the proposed site, Acorn Property Group, is an award winning independent development company. They have over 20 years' experience of successfully completing a wide range of developments, including in the residential and commercial sectors.

5.17 The final design of the scheme will be developed through the detailed planning process. The developer and current landowners are committed to delivering a sensitive and high quality scheme that delivers both much needs homes and a number of other benefits to the community.



#### **To conserve and retain heritage assets**

- 5.18 There are no listed buildings within or immediately adjacent to site and the site is outside of the Sherston Conservation Area. The earthwork immediately south of the road and school is a Scheduled Monument, and several listed buildings lie in the historic centre of the village.
- 5.19 A key issue for consideration will be any effects on the Conservation Area to the south of the site. Most attention would likely be on how this is experienced on entering the village on the road from Sopworth from the west. The new build of the School is an important point, and provides modern form on this approach, as does all of the post-war development north of Green Lane. It is unlikely that the development would have any significant impact on the conservation area. Design measures, for example by potentially providing the part of the site next to the road/school as green space, would help to give a suitable buffer to the conservation area.
- 5.20 A desk-based assessment would be required to inform on any below-ground archaeological remains.

## **Economic**

#### **To facilitate employment opportunities in the Parish**

##### **Construction**

- 5.21 The construction phase of the development is anticipated to last approximately 2 years. Throughout this period there will be significant investment in both on and off-site infrastructure and construction activity.
- 5.22 Significant sums will be invested directly into construction related activities in the local area. This investment will create considerable opportunities for the construction sector in terms of direct employment, sub-contracting and the supply chain for materials and equipment.
- 5.23 The applicant is committed to using all reasonable endeavours to utilise local labour and suppliers throughout the construction phase.

##### **Operational Phase**

- 5.24 The inclusion of the GP surgery will help to secure a number of existing jobs in the village. The provision of land to facilitate the future expansion of the primary school also has the potential to support the provision of additional employment opportunities in the future.
- 5.25 The provision of additional homes in the village will also support existing local business and other community facilities by providing additional customers and users.

## **Social**

#### **To meet the housing needs of all the community**

- 5.26 It is currently envisaged that the site could delivery up to 45 new homes for Sherston, with a proportion of these being affordable homes.



5.27 The 2012 Parish Housing Needs Survey identified a need at that time for the following:

**Subsidised rented housing**

- 3 x one bed homes for singles/couples
- 8 x two bed homes for families
- 3 x three bed homes for families
- 1 x four bed homes for families

**Shared/low cost home ownership**

- 3 x two bed homes for families
- 2 x four bed homes for families

**Sheltered housing for older people**

- 1 x two bed sheltered shared ownership home for single/couple

5.28 Whilst the final mix in terms of tenure and the sizes of dwellings will be finalised at a later date and the current requirements in terms of housing need will need to be factored in, there is a need for affordable housing. The development of the site will assist in meeting the housing needs of the community through the provision of homes that will meet the needs of households that are unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

**To meet the healthcare, social and cultural needs of all the community**

5.29 The provision of a new enhanced GP surgery has been identified through the work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan as a key objective. The proposed development supports the delivery of this objective and as such will assist in meeting the healthcare needs of the community into the future.

**To locate development in areas with good public transport, walking and cycling links**

5.30 As set out below, the proposed development would be very well located in terms of existing facilities within Sherston. The proposed development would also be within 500m of the nearest bus stop. The village is currently served by three coach and bus services (Nos. 36, 37 and 41) providing a good level of public transport provision to locations including Malmesbury, Chippenham and Bath.

**To locate development in a close proximity to services and facilities**

5.31 The proposed development would be within walking distance (500m or less) of a number of local services and facilities, including the primary school, village shop, play area, sports facilities and parish church.

**To promote mixed use developments**

5.32 The proposed development will provide a mix of uses, including housing, a GP surgery and additional land for the primary school. As outlined in the analysis of a number of the other sustainability objectives, there a range of benefits associated with the proposed development mix.



## 6. Conclusions & Next Steps

### Conclusion

- 6.1 The table below summarises the result of the initial assessment of the proposed allocation against the identified sustainable development criteria. The conclusions are presented using a simple 'traffic light' system.

Sustainable Development Criteria	Results of Assessment
Impact on the countryside	Amber
Retain distinctiveness of Sherston	Green
Retain and enhance biodiversity	Amber
Seek high quality design	Green
Conserve and retain heritage assets	Amber
Facilitate employment opportunities	Green
Meet housing needs of community	Green
Meet healthcare, social and cultural needs	Green
Good access to public transport, walking and cycling	Green
Close proximity to services and facilities	Green
Promote mixed-use development	Green

- 6.2 The information presented in the report suggest that the proposed development meets the majority of sustainability objectives. Three of the objectives have been identified as being 'amber' on the basis that additional work will be required in order demonstrate how these particular objectives will be met. This additional work is expected to help inform and shape the development.
- 6.3 The work required is outlined under the relevant objective in Section 5. This work will be completed either prior to the finalisation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, or as part of a more detailed planning application in the future.



- 6.4 The analysis carried out for the purposes of this report shows that, subject to further refinement through the identified technical work, the proposed site is suitable for development and as such allocation in the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.5 The site is available and offers an opportunity to deliver both affordable and market homes to meet local need, along with a number of other benefits, including the provision of a new GP surgery.

### **Basic Conditions**

- 6.6 This report does not assess whether the proposed development site will satisfy the basic conditions for a neighbourhood plan. However, the site's performance in respect of the sustainability objectives above should give the Steering Group confidence that its inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan will accord with the requirement to meet the basic conditions.

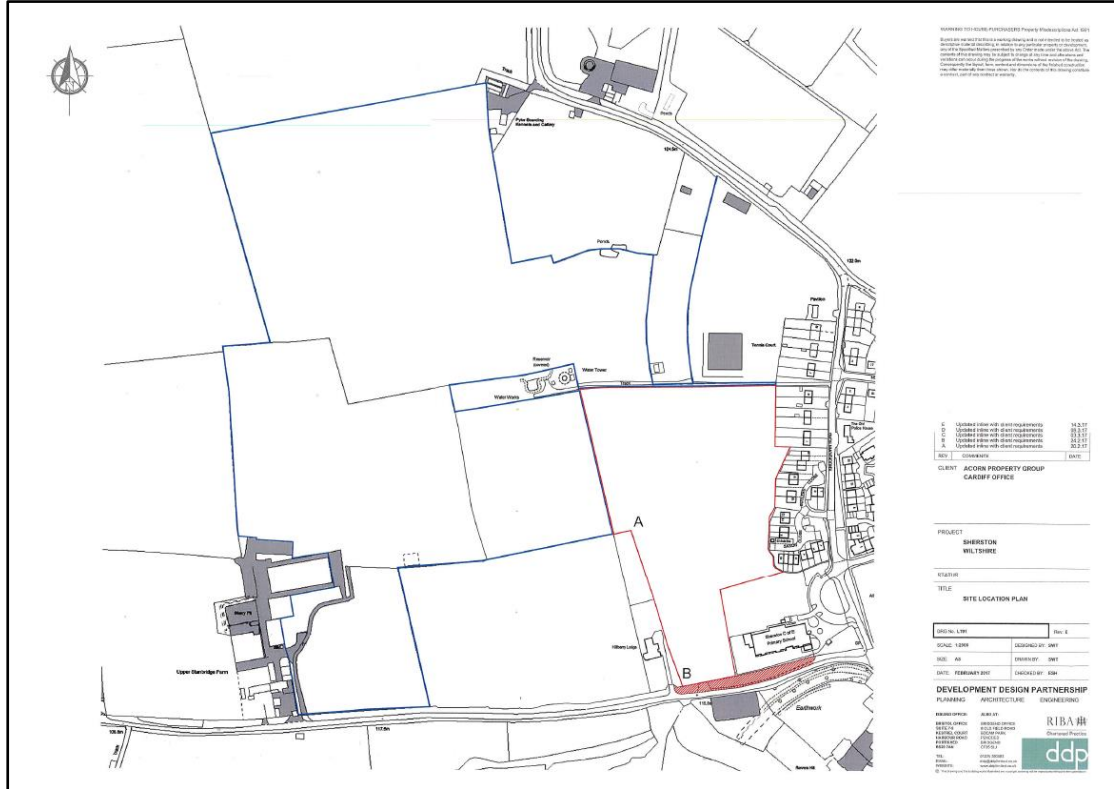
### **Next Steps**

- 6.7 The next stage in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is for the Steering Group to draft the pre-submission consultation version of the Plan. This will need to be consulted on for a minimum period of 6 weeks.
- 6.8 Following the consideration of any comments received it will need to be amended and the proposed Neighbourhood Plan submitted to the local planning authority, Wiltshire Council.
- 6.9 Wiltshire Council is responsible for checking that the Neighbourhood Plan has followed the proper legal process and requirements. The Council is also responsible for publicising the proposed plan and arranging for the independent examination and referendum to take place.
- 6.10 It is recommended that the Steering Group engage with Wiltshire Council as soon as possible in order to discuss any concerns that they might have about whether the plan meets the basic conditions.





# APPENDIX 1 – Site Location Plan





## APPENDIX 2 – Photo Sheet



View of existing access onto Green Lane



View of access to the school via Knockdown Rd



View towards the water tower (N/W corner) taken from the access onto Green Lane



View towards the school taken from the site access onto Green Lane



View from N/W corner, along northern boundary, towards eastern boundary



Public footpath opposite the site access on Green Lane



View along northern boundary towards the water tower (located in the N/W corner)



View from the track of the eastern boundary with the rear of the properties on Knockdown Rd beyond