

**URBAN
VISION**

Enterprise CIC

**Oakley Neighbourhood Plan
Site Assessments
February 2018**

Contents:

- 1. Introduction**
 - 1.1 The Commission
 - 1.2 Approach
 - 1.3 About Urban Vision Enterprise CIC

- 2. Local Context**
 - 2.1 Location and Neighbourhood Area
 - 2.2 Planning Context

- 3. Sites Assessments**
 - 3.1 The Sites
 - 3.2 Issues and Challenges
 - 3.3 Potential Local Green Space Designations

- 4. Next Steps**
 - 4.1 Issues to Be Addressed
 - 4.2 Recommendations

- 5.0 Evidence and Sources**

- Contacts**

1. Introduction

1.1 The Commission

UVE has been commissioned by Oakley Parish Council to carry out a range of site assessments in the Oakley Neighbourhood Area, in order to provide evidence for the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

Key tasks are as follows:

- To assess 6 sites for their residential potential, or potential for Local Green Space designation;
- To provide analysis of the planning context, and strategic growth context;
- To identify capacity, potential mitigation, access points and any further work needed (e.g. ecology) for each site; and
- To present options suitable for consideration later in a Strategic Environmental Assessment (reasonable alternatives); and
- To produce a draft report to the Parish Council for comment and presentation if required.

1.2 Approach

The purpose of the site assessments is to produce a clear assessment as to whether the identified potential sites are appropriate for allocation in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan, in particular whether

they comply with both National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of Bedford Borough Council's adopted and emerging Local Plan.

This report is based upon the independent assessment by Urban Vision Enterprise CIC and includes the aspirations raised by Oakley Parish Council. Our assessment is based upon data that was provided by the Parish Council, and a variety of other independent sources. The conclusions of this report should be considered together with the aspiration of the Parish Council, although it is acknowledged that some of these aspirations may not be viable in future developments.

1.3 About Urban Vision Enterprise CIC

Urban Vision Enterprise (UVE) is a professional planning practice and a social enterprise (Community Interest Company). Neighbourhood planning is one of Urban Vision Enterprise's key specialisms. We are a partner in the current national support programme and were a partner in the previous programme. We have authored guidance on neighbourhood planning, including the ***Locality Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide***, which is widely used by neighbourhood planning bodies around the country.

Other specialisms include:

- Community engagement and consultation;
- Housing needs assessment;
- Heritage-led regeneration and conservation;
- Urban design, including design review;

- Feasibility studies;
- Project business plans;
- Community projects;
- Community-led development;
- Training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education; and
- Third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development.

Clients include UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, local councils, neighbourhood forums and local community groups. Urban Vision Enterprise directors have extensive experience of dealing with urban and rural areas, including city and town centres and villages all around the country.

We believe that planning should be a creative, positive and participatory activity. We bring a range of high-level skills and extensive experience, but are also friendly, informal and able to communicate in plain English.

Urban Vision Enterprise is ISO 9001 Registered and an IHBC recognised historic environment service provider (HESPR).

2. Local Context

2.1 Location and Neighbourhood Area

The Oakley Neighbourhood Area is located around four miles north west of Bedford, just off the A6.

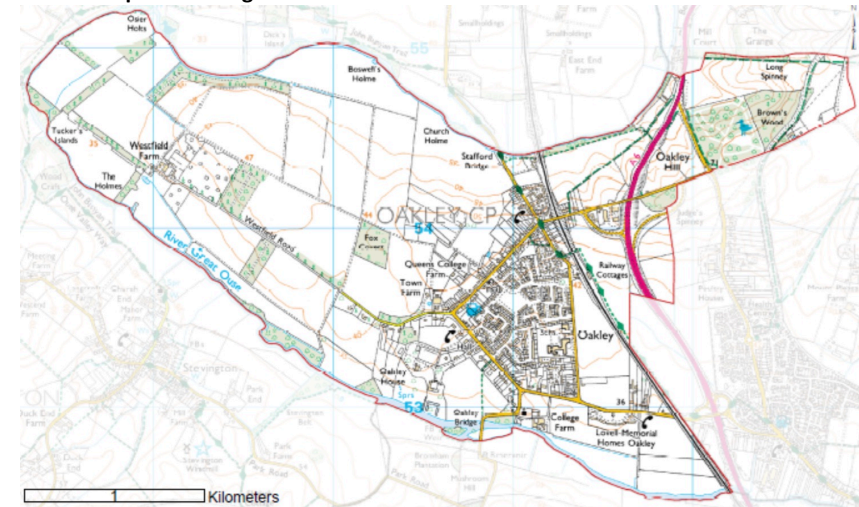
Oakley is an attractive and historic village alongside the River Great Ouse, and has a population of around 2,500.

The Neighbourhood Area was designated in November 2013, and Oakley Parish Council has progressed the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish.

At the same time, Bedford Borough Council is progressing the development of a new Local Plan (Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035), which is proposing an allocation of 25-50 homes for Oakley.

A range of sites have been proposed in Oakley, and are the subject of this report.

Plan 1: Map of the Neighbourhood Area



(Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation, November 2013)

2.2 Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** sets out the Government's planning policies, and how they expect that these should be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a ***"presumption in favour of sustainable development"***.

Paragraph 6 of the NPPF states that:

“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”.

Paragraph 7 describes **“three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental”**, meaning that the planning system must play the following roles:

“an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and to mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy”.

All three of these roles are seen as “mutually dependent”.

Achieving sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements to the quality of the built and natural environment, and the quality of people’s lives through measures including:

- Creating the environment for job creation in villages, towns and cities;
- The achievement of a net gain for nature;
- Replacement of poor design with good design;
- Improving the way in which people live, work, travel, and spend leisure time; and
- Broadening the choice of homes.

Paragraph 10 stresses the need for plans and decisions to **“take local circumstances into account”** in order to ensure that “different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas” are taken.

Paragraph 47 sets out the way in which Local Planning Authorities should seek to **“boost significantly the supply of housing”** in their area, and specifically that they have an evidence base that ensures that “their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area”. This includes:

- Ensuring that sufficient sites are identified to enable the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period;
- To identify and update each year a sufficient supply of specific “deliverable” sites to ensure five years’ worth of housing land

with an additional 5% buffer, or a 20% buffer where there has been persistent under delivery; and

- To identify specific deliverable sites or broad locations for housing growth for years 6-10 of the plan period, and years 11-15 where this is possible.

The density of housing should be determined by the Local Planning Authority to reflect specific local circumstances.

Paragraph 49 states that “relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites”.

In order to deliver a wide choice of homes to high standards, and create sustainable, balanced and inclusive communities, paragraph 50 states that Local Planning Authorities should:

“Plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);

Identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and

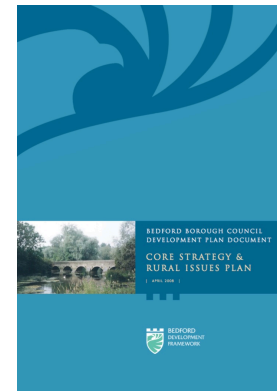
where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or

make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time”.

Paragraph 69 describes how **“the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy and inclusive communities”**. Key to achieving this, is to “ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services”.

Local Planning Policy

The current adopted local plan is provided by the **Core Strategy and Rural Issues Development Plan Document**, which sets out the spatial vision for Bedford to 2021. The plan was adopted by the council in April 2008.



Oakley is located within the rural policy area, and not all of the policies within the Core Strategy are applicable to the village. Policies applicable to the Oakley Neighbourhood Area are highlighted in the following table:

Policy	Applies to the Growth Area	Applies to the Rural Policy Area
CP1 and CP2	✓	✓
CP3 to CP6	✓	✗
CP7 to CP11	✓	✓
CP12 and CP13	✓	✓
CP14	✗	✓
CP15 and CP16	✗	✓
CP17 and CP18	✓	✓
CP19 to CP31	✓	✓

However, the Core Strategy is now out-of-date, and Bedford Borough Council are preparing a new Local Plan, and therefore the site assessments are being considered in this context.

The Council commenced the preparation of **Local Plan 2035** in 2014, and the plan is now at draft stage, with the proposed submission due to go before the Council’s Executive early in 2018. It is anticipated that the plan will be adopted during the summer of 2019.

The plan identifies Oakley as a “Group 2 village” and “rural service centre”, with a proposed allocation of 25-50 units. Bedford Borough Council has stated that “where Parish Councils have made significant progress in writing a Neighbourhood Plan and want to deliver the

amount of development required by the local plan’s strategy, we intend to leave the selection of sites to them”. Oakley Parish Council has confirmed that they intend to take this approach.

The site assessments carried out in Section 3 are intended to provide the Parish Council with the evidence to support their position.

3. Site Assessments

3.1 The Sites

The original proposal indicated that a number of sites would need to be assessed for their potential as residential development sites, and these sites were visited on 14th November 2017.

The sites are identified on Plan 2 below.

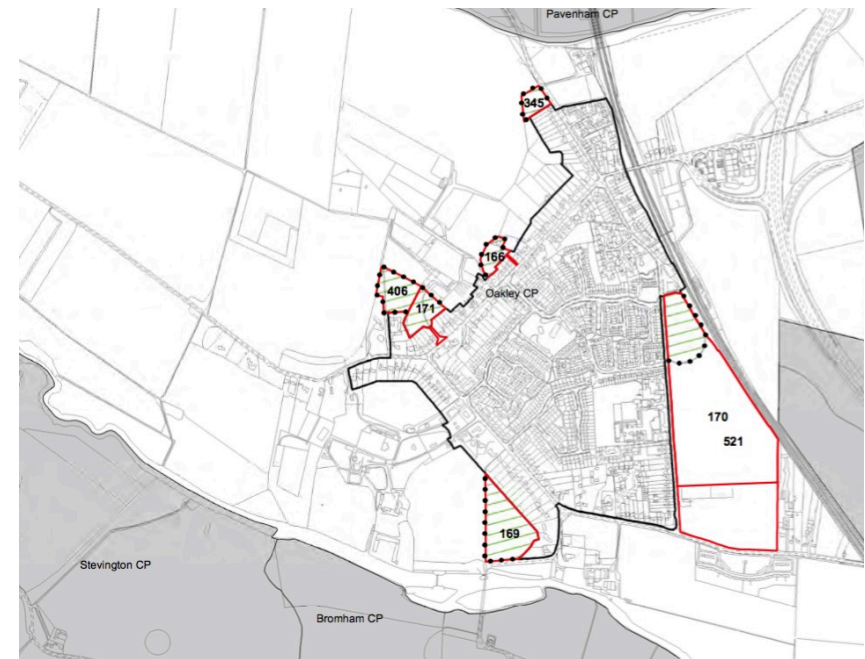
Each site has been considered as a potential development site on its own merits, but in the context of the wider challenges that the Neighbourhood Area faces.

The potential development sites are as follows.

Site	Issues/Challenges/Constraints	Comments
Site 166: Rear of High Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access • Outside of settlement boundary • Trees • Ecology considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small site, potentially low density • Not an obvious extension to the village envelope
Site 170 &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways issues (including 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to

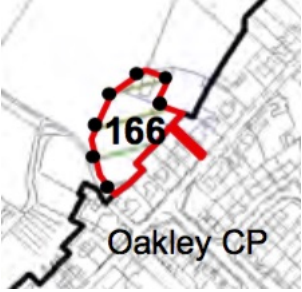
521: Station Road	traffic related to the schools) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole of the site would be constrained by wider infrastructure issues 	reconfigure school playing fields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to develop part of the site
Site 169: Church Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfield site, immediately adjoining the settlement boundary • Highways issues (pinch point immediately to the south of the site involving Grade I Listed bridge with weight restriction) • Public right of way along the western boundary of the site • Flood risk (part of the site located in Floodzone A) • Impact on setting of heritage assets (Oakley Hall and grounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would make a logical extension of the settlement from a spatial perspective • Too many constraints for the site to be developable
Site 171: Rear of High Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access has been created, would it be to sufficient standards? • Ecology considerations • Outside the settlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would make a logical extension to the settlement

	boundary	<p>from a spatial perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wouldn't have a big capacity
Site 345: Pavenham Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside the settlement boundary • Ecology considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not an obvious extension to the village envelope (would pull it northwards) • Small site, wouldn't have a big capacity
Site 406: Town Farm off Westfield Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside the settlement boundary • Ecology considerations • Current access proposals onto Westfield Road will be challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not dramatically change the settlement boundary




Plan 2: Sites Assessed for Housing Potential in Oakley

Each of the sites has been assessed individually but in the context of the wider challenges facing the village.

<p>Site 166: Rear of High Street</p>	
<p>Challenges and Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a safe access arrangement would be challenging • The site falls outside of the settlement boundary, and although this could be amended through the Neighbourhood Plan, there is no real defensible boundary to the north, and given that the boundary follows High Street, it would not make sense from a spatial perspective • The site has tree cover, although it is acknowledged that these 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of homes could be achieved, which would make a contribution towards Oakley's housing requirements

<p>are not protected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road constraints are river and railway bridge both one lane, 6'6' width restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road • Highway issues with 500 additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428 • Landscape views as in Landscape Policy 	
<p>Potential Capacity: 8</p>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small site on the northern fringe of the settlement boundary • Could make a limited contribution to local housing requirements • Amendment of the settlement boundary would not make sense from a spatial perspective • Creation of a safe access arrangement would be difficult to achieve 	

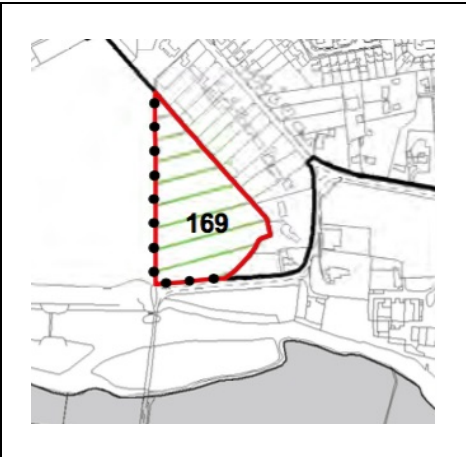
- It is considered that the site should not be progressed

<p>Site 170 & 521: Station Road</p>	
<p>Challenges and Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider infrastructure issues would prevent the delivery of the whole site • Conflict with aspirations of the school in terms of their sports provision • Highways issues relating to the schools • Road constraints are river and railway bridge both one lane, 6'6" width 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a balanced housing offer that can help to address identified local needs • Development of part of the site could address Oakley's housing requirements (northern part of the site to local densities)

<p>restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway issues with 500 additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428 • Landscape views as in Landscape Policy and Coalescence Policy that states no coalescence with Clapham 	
<p>Potential Capacity: part of the site could be considered for 25 houses on the northern edge, though the site would have an overall capacity of 50 units</p>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whole site would be constrained by local infrastructure issues (in the main highways and access) • Part of the site would be developable and a balanced housing offer could be achieved 	

- A balance would need to be struck in terms of securing appropriate planning gain and viability

Site 169: Church Lane



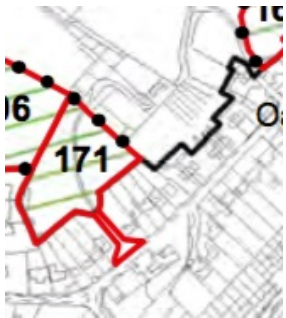
- Challenges and Constraints:
- Site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary
 - The site is at risk of flooding
 - Access to the south of the site would be constrained (pinch point involving Grade I Listed bridge with weight restriction)

- Opportunities:
- The site would provide an opportunity to deliver a balanced housing offer that helped to address identified local housing needs
 - The site could help to address Oakley's housing requirements


- A public right of way runs along the western boundary of the site
- The site plays an important role in the setting of Oakley Hall and its grounds
- Road constraints are river and railway bridge both one lane, 6'6" width restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road
- Highway issues with 500 additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428
- Landscape views as in Landscape Policy

Potential Capacity: 20-22


<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site should not be progressed due to the various constraints that affect the site (flood risk, access challenges, etc.) • The site is being considered as a Local Green Space

Site 171: Rear of High Street	
<p>Challenges and Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access, although it is acknowledged that an access point has been created • Site is outside of the settlement boundary • Ecology considerations • Road constraints are river and railway bridge both 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited capacity • Would make a contribution towards Oakley's housing requirements

<p>one lane, 6'6' width restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway issues with 500 additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428 • Landscape views as in Landscape Policy 	
<p>Potential Capacity: 25</p>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the two sites to the rear of High Street, this would make more sense from a spatial perspective • Possible site in the light of no suitable alternative. 	

<p>Site 345: Pavenham Road</p>	
<p>Challenges and Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is outside the settlement boundary • Ecology considerations • No defensible boundaries • Protected in the Ouse Valley Landscape Assessment. Inspector at an inquiry stated “there should be no building north” • Road constraints are river and railway bridge both one lane, 6’6’ width restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road • Highway issues with 500 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small site, limited capacity • Would make a contribution towards Oakley’s housing requirements

<p>additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428</p>	
<p>Potential Capacity: 10</p>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the site would take the village beyond its most northern extremity • Site should not be progressed given that there are more appropriate sites available 	

<p>Site 406: Town Farm off Westfield Road</p>	
<p>Challenges and Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is outside the settlement boundary • Ecology considerations • No defensible boundaries • Road constraints are river and railway bridge both one lane, 6'6" width restriction in Church Lane, High St and Station Road • Highway issues with 500 additional houses each in Bromham and Clapham being proposed in the catchment area of Lincroft School impact on wider infrastructure plus the 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would make a positive contribution towards Oakley's housing requirements

<p>increased traffic over and above that already use Oakley roads to access the A6, A421 and A428</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current access proposals onto Westfield Road will be challenging 	
<p>Potential Capacity: 25</p>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site would not extend the village envelope dramatically • Could provide a balanced housing offer 	

It is considered that the following sites should be considered for allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Station Road (northern part only): 25 units; and
- High St – Opposite Bedford Arms PH: 25 units

This would address Oakley's housing requirement from the emerging new Local Plan of 25-50 units. In addition, Site 406 (Town Farm), and speculative infill development within the settlement area, could potentially address any further housing needs.

The identified sites would provide the opportunity to deliver a balanced housing offer that would address identified local housing needs.

A range of enabling policies – in areas such as design, and housing mix – should be developed to support the allocation of the sites.

It is considered that this approach recognises and acknowledges Oakley's clear infrastructure constraints. These are discussed further below.

3.2 Issues and Challenges

As well as the issues and challenges related to the specific individual sites, Oakley is constrained in its potential to achieve larger scale growth due to two main issues:

- Highways issues and the local road network; and
- Flood risk to the south of the village.

The road network within the village (particularly the High Street area) was not designed for large volumes of traffic. This gives rise to a number of problems, particularly when issues arise on the A6.

The presence of two schools along Station Road generates large volumes of traffic in the morning and afternoon.

To the south of the village along Church Lane, there is a particularly challenging pinch point due to the presence of a Grade I Listed bridge

over the River Great Ouse. The bridge also has a weight restriction of 17 tonnes.

It should also be considered that a new settlement is being proposed at Colworth, Sharnbrook north of Oakley, and traffic associated with this that travels south could impact on the Oakley area, particularly when problems arise on the A6.

3.3 Potential Local Green Space Designations

In addition to considering sites for residential development, a range of sites have also been considered as having potential for Local Green Space designation. The justification for the designations is provided in a separate report. However, the assessments have been carried out alongside the housing site assessments.

The sites considered for Local Green Space designation are as follows:

- Site 144: Browns Wood/Millennium Wood;
- Site 147: Woodland on Westfield Road;
- Site 152: Oakley Academy Playing Field;
- Site 154: Grange Close/Station Road; and
- Site 155: Land North of the River.

As referred to previously, the detail behind the assessments for Local Green Space designation are covered by a separate report, but for the purposes of this report, all five sites will be proposed for designation.

Plan 3 below identifies the proposed Local Green Space designations.



Plan 3: Proposed Local Green Spaces in Oakley

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 Issues to be Addressed

There are a range of issues that will need to be addressed through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and its evidence base, and these are:

- Further evidence will need to be developed to support the proposed Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in terms of local housing needs and landscape character in order to further strengthen the evidence base; and
- Continued engagement with the Local Plan process is vital to help to ensure that strategic policies are prepared that complement the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 Recommendations

In terms of moving forward, it is considered that the following will be important actions:

1. Further development of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan's evidence base (particularly in terms of local housing needs, and landscape character);
2. Consideration of site briefs for the proposed housing sites;
3. The Parish Council should continue to positively engage with the Local Plan process (based on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan evidence base); and

4. Consideration of a community action plan (this could be detailed in a non-planning section of the Neighbourhood Plan) relating to the proposed Local Green Spaces.

5.0 Evidence and Sources

The report has drawn on a number of sources, including:

- Bedford Borough Council: Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008);
- DCLG: National Planning Policy Framework (2012);
- Bedford Borough Council: Local Plan 2035 Consultation Paper (2017); and
- Oakley Parish Council: LGS Submissions (2017).

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