

# Undertaking the evaluation of Site Criteria – Guide to approach

## General

When considering pedestrian distances, the SON 1-15 map with its key showing the distance represented by 300m is a good tool to use and will allow routes from the centre of sites to key objectives to be readily measured. Generally a “safe” distance of 400m or less is considered good (green), and if 401-800m is considered less good (amber), or if longer or of compromised safety would be poor (red).

The first 7 evaluations for each SON site (items 2-8) come directly from the summary of the surveys made locally by residents. These took account of the boxes ticked (where applicable) **and** a careful reading and interpretation of the comments, views expressed for each section **and** overall.

## The criteria A-AD include judgements of fact

Criteria items **A-C** concern the information gained from landowners as to their willingness to make their land available for alternative use in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. An unequivocal yes gave green and unequivocal no gave red.

Criterion **D** identified particular environmental and ecology/wildlife considerations. The existence of legally protected slowworms on SON 12 was flagged even back to the SODC SHLAA process when sites were first identified. SON 14 with its unusual topography and its relationship to Widmore Pond drew attention - as did SONs 4 and 5 – particularly in relation to the anomaly of the large and deep chalk mine/sinkhole sitting just outside SON 5 (with the unusual flints there) and associated ecology. Ecology and environment was also flagged for SONs 10, 15A and especially 15B, with its location and important hedgerows.

Criterion **E** looked at the extent that sites would be ‘Greenfield’. A Greenfield site was less desirable (red). Partial previous building – even of a stable would indicate amber and full previous building development would indicate green as a fully Brownfield site.

Criterion **F** looked at Tree Preservation Orders, existing on SONs 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9. TPO’s in middle of site marked red, but if only on border, then amber.

Criterion **G** looked at any archaeological interest. SON 5 was flagged because of the deep old chalk mine/sinkhole just outside it with its huge flints and the fact that flint hand-axes from the Palaeolithic era have been found on sites around the south of Sonning Common including ‘Kennylands’ – actually just off Bird-in-Hand Lane. Representations have also been made that this was later a deep chalk mine with tunnels, one of which is said to extend under SON 5, that were used during WW2 before being sealed with explosives.

Criterion **H** looked at heritage assets. Although not a registered listed building, Reddish Manor dates in part from the early 1500s and is of Tudor Oak-framed and jettied construction with brick in-fill and still retains the character of that era. It is immediately on the boundary of SON 11 and flagged red. Widmore Pond (SON 14) with its long history back to the Roman era and the ancient woodland of Old Copse (SON 1), which was placed in Trust by local subscription, are adjacent to sites and flagged amber.

Criterion **I** looked at the quality of agricultural land. The available SODC maps show Grades 1-5, but not sub-grades. Any site with any Grade 2 or above land was flagged red. Any with Grade 3 was flagged amber and any lesser or non-agricultural graded land was flagged green.

Criterion **J** considered infrastructure deficiencies notably roads for access and bringing in services. The sites of SONs 1, 4, 8 (plus Millennium Green issue), 12, full 13, 14 and 15B attracted attention as red, because of having no or inadequate supporting roads. SONs 5, full 11, part 13 and 15A were considered compromised and flagged amber.

Criterion **K** looked at landscape quality with particular reference to AONB and adjacencies in the case of high-quality AONB. If a site is in an AONB it was flagged amber, but if also of high quality is flagged red. If a site is not AONB, but adjacent to high-quality AONB on which it is liable to impact it was flagged amber; otherwise green.

Criterion **L** looked at flood risk or established drainage problems – either on site or risks to adjacent housing etc. Housing below SON 12 has had problems of drainage from above, flagged red. The steep spur of hill comprising SON 14 was considered as risk to surrounding areas and particularly to Widmore Pond (and its ecology) if developed – so also red. SON 5 has had problems from chalk sinkholes arising from water drainage through the chalk soil there, flagged amber. The latter also applies to 15A and 15B, with concerns about potential run off onto Kidmore Lane. Full SON 11 has had problems on drainage in the deeper part of the site - amber flag.

Criterion **M** considered access to the highway network. SONs 1, 4, 8 and 14 were considered to have no adequate existing options – red. SONs 2, 5, 12 and 15B were flagged as having presently compromised options – amber.

Criterion **N** considered access to healthcare facilities. Here pedestrian **and** bus access was considered. In the absence of bus cover, and if safe, a distance of 400m was considered green, 800m amber and longer or less safe routes flagged red. If bus access was good the site was considered green. (See 'General' above)

Criterion **O** specifically considered the walking distance and safety to access regular bus services.

Criteria **P** and **Q** considered access to shops and community facilities on the same approach as N above.

Criterion **R** considered walking distances to schools with consideration of safety. SON 10 flagged red on distance and safety. Distance and safety factors to the primary school were factors in flagging SON 15B as amber.

Criterion **S** looked at traffic and parking issues and risks. This included risks of over-spill on-road parking and the extent of consequences.

Criterion **T** looked at the extent that a site was already within or continuously next to the built settlement.

Criterion **U** looked at natural or existing boundaries to the site and its enclosure. Comparison was made across the sites for consistency.

Criterion **V** considered any constraints on the type of housing that a site might take preventing it having a full mix. SONs 8, 14 and 15B were considered to be only able to take low ridged properties if development followed, taking account of their position and size.

Criterion **AA** considered whether development of a given site could expand our settlement in a way that could set up precedents for further development - involving a trend towards merger with another settlement (contrary to the NPPF and SODC Core Strategy). SONs 4, 5 and 15B were considered a high (red) risk in that way and the sites of SONs full 6, full 13 and 15A an amber risk.

Criterion **AB** considered whether a site would be in keeping with, or constrained by, the built density and character of its surrounds.

Criterion **AC** considered whether the potential development use for a site would be compatible with its neighbouring uses, including with reference to open countryside and AONB, taking account of the quality of trees and hedges on the boundaries.

Criterion **AD** considered whether development would support the vitality and viability of the Village Centre and its key access roads.

Criterion **AE** considered if a site was important by way of public access, right of way or recreation facilities or open space. Footpaths and use on SONs 1, 4 and 15B plus the gymnastics facility on SON 8 attracted attention.

Criterion **AF** gave particular attention to the landscape setting of the village looking in from outside, taking due account of topography and green screening. SONs 4, 10, full 11, 12, full 13, 14 and 15B would have strong impact and were flagged red.

Finally **AG-AK** look at potential uses for given sites.

As information, **AM-AO** give an outline of space requirement for uses other than housing. Below the proposal section, the information box shows the full size of sites in hectares and existing use.