

MODIFIED BLOXHAM COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT ADDENDUM)

OCTOBER 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Environmental Report Addendum to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the submitted Modified Bloxham Community Neighbourhood Plan (NP2) has been prepared by consultants, ONH Planning for Good, on behalf of Bloxham Parish Council (BPC), the Qualifying Body. The neighbourhood plan covers the Parish of Bloxham in Cherwell District in Oxfordshire.

1.2 The Addendum has been prepared to supplement the draft Environmental (SEA) Report produced by consultants, AECOM, and published by BPC along with the Pre-Submission NP2 in August 2025 for consultation. AECOM is not able to complete the final Report due to the ending of the Government's Neighbourhood Plan Support Programme, which funded the production of the draft Report.

1.3 The Addendum summarises the small number of material policy modifications made to NP2 for submission following the consultation period. The NP2, along with the Draft Report and this Addendum and other documentation, is now submitted to the local planning authority, Cherwell District Council (CDC), to arrange the independent examination.

2. MODIFICATIONS TO NP2

2.1 There has been no material change in context, so the evidence base and approach taken in the draft Environmental Report to defining and assessing reasonable alternatives remain valid and unaltered. In addition, there are no new policies nor deletions and the proposed site allocation (Policy BL2) remains, albeit with some modifications to its provisions.

2.2 The material policy modifications made to the final version of NP2 are:

Policy BL1

2.3 The policy now includes (as B(iii)) the land west of Tadmarton Road to acknowledge it has now received planning permission. The total number of homes provided for in the policy has therefore increased by 55 homes to 340 homes. BPC considered the option of deleting or phasing the site allocation in Policy BL2 but has chosen to retain the policy (see below).

Policy BL2

2.4 The policy has been restructured to distinguish its land use and development management principles, however the site boundary, land use mix and housing quantum proposals are retained. The flood risk management and layout provisions (the latter to reflect the close proximity of the school) have been updated and a requirement added for the proposals to adhere to the principles of the Concept Masterplan.

Policy BL4

2.5 The policy provisions and wording have been brought into line with the adopted highways authority approach to parking in rural settlements.

Policy BL11

2.6 BPC has agreed to add a clause B to the policy to make specific reference to the prominence of the St. Mary's Church spire in views throughout and into the village from public vantage points.

Policy BL12 (and BL1)

2.7 BPC agreed to modify the policy to remove the maximum size of Class E unit supported by it. This will allow for more flexibility in how commercial, business and service uses are planned for in the village.

2.8 BPC also agreed to modify the Settlement Boundary in BL1 to more accurately reflect and accommodate the operational area and established Class E use of land at Bloxham Mill.

Other Policy Modifications

2.9 A number of other policies have been modified but either not in a material way or that alter the environmental effects concluded by the Draft Environmental Report.

Other Matters

2.10 Some criticisms were made of the approach taken to identifying and assessing the reasonable alternatives in the Draft Environmental Report in the comments received during the consultation period. The criticisms extended into the way in which BPC used its planning judgement to make its final site selection.

2.11 Having reviewed the approach taken by AECOM in its Report, and the explanation of its broader site assessment and selection process (in Appendix 1 of BNP2), it is considered that a reasoned and proportionate approach and process has been followed per the Regulations. There are no 'fundamental flaws' or irrational conclusions drawn in the Report or Appendix; instead both take care to tell the story of how the site allocation decision was arrived at and why other sites were not selected.

2.12 There are no inaccuracies in the evidence base used to assess the sites that are so significant they would have led to different conclusions. AECOM acknowledges the limitations in the evidence in setting out its methodology (§7.4 on p30) and both it and BPC sought to avoid attributing weight differently across the assessment themes in their respective processes.

2.13 Instead, both looked at the assessment conclusions in the round and BPC determined that ultimately being able to allocate land on which infrastructure improvements (i.e. school expansion) could be delivered, as opposed to relying on financial contributions to off-site works alone, was most important.

2.14 In terms of process, the NP2 Appendix explains how and when the initial 'scenarios' and site assessments using the SEA framework were synchronised with BPC's site assessment work. This enabled each to inform the other, precisely in the way intended and required by the Regulations and national policy. Although the Draft Environmental Report was published for consultation three weeks after the Regulation 14 period started, its consultation period extended to the mandatory six week minimum. This approach was explained in the NP2 consultation materials.

2.15 There is no obligation in the Regulations or in any other national planning policy for a neighbourhood plan to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. However, it is considered the SEA scope of objectives for NP2 allows in any event for a broader assessment than on narrow environmental matters, e.g. community well-being.

3. UPDATED ASSESSMENT

3.1 The material policy modifications have been assessed against the findings of the Draft Environmental Report.

3.2 In Policy BL1, the retention of the site allocation of Policy BL2 in the light of the approval of the 55 home scheme at West of Tadmarton Road has the potential for adverse traffic, air quality, heritage and community well-being effects as the total number of homes provided for in the policy has increased by 19% to 340 homes; in practice, only the combination of traffic generated by the two Tadmarton Road sites (a total of 180 homes) may cause congestion on the local road network but not to the extent that would be regarded as 'severe'; both proposals already and will include traffic management measures to mitigate harmful effects and both lie within walking distance of most village services and schools; the 19% increase in the total number of homes planned for in not considered to be so significant to reach a tipping point leading to a change in the scale of other environment effects; in which case **its potential environmental effects are unaltered.**

3.3 The modified Policy BL2 is intended to strengthen the mitigation measures in respect of site layout, design and flood risk management to ensure the overall effects of the plan remain neutral; there remains the potential for significant negative landscape effects but the technical work undertaken by the land interest indicates a layout following the parameters set by the Concept Masterplan and the location of bungalows on the eastern development parcel, where the potential harm at the foot of Hobb Hill is greater, can minimise that potential to less than significant; in which case **its overall potential environmental effects are unaltered.**

3.4 The modifications to Policy BL4 are considered material but **its potential environmental effects are unaltered.** The modifications to Policy BL11 are considered material and **will strengthen its positive heritage effect.**

3.5 As Policy BL12 still requires those uses to be located within the Settlement Boundary, and as there are other design and management policies in NP2 and elsewhere in the development plan, **its potential environmental effects are unaltered.** The modified Settlement Boundary at Bloxham Mill is considered minor and therefore **the potential environmental effects are unaltered.**

4. CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

4.1 It is concluded that the material policy modifications will not alter the main Draft Environmental Report conclusions (in its Section 9) that NP2 has the potential to deliver significant positive community well-being effects in a way that will have neutral effects across all the other assessment themes of the SEA framework.

4.2 In terms of its Plan Finalisation and Monitoring content of Section 10 of the Draft Environmental Report, NP2 will now be submitted for examination and once remade its effects will be monitored as set out in §10.7 of the Report.