



STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT ADDENDUM)

SEPTEMBER 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Environmental Report Addendum to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the submitted Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2042 (MCNP2) has been prepared by consultants, ONH Planning for Good, on behalf of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum (MCNPF) and its Qualifying Body, Ardley with Fewcote Parish Council. The MCNP2 is a multi-parish neighbourhood plan covering much of the central area of Cherwell District in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 The Addendum has been prepared to supplement the draft Environmental Report produced by consultants, AECOM, and published by MCNPF along with the Pre-Submission MCNP2 in April 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 the MCNP2 for submission following the consultation period. Although the production of MCNP2 was informed by the SEA work, some of these modifications were prompted by the final version of the Draft Environmental Report itself, as it was completed after the draft MCNP2 had been approved by the MCNPF for consultation.
- 1.4 The MCNP2, 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 MCNP2

- 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 allocations (policies MC2 – MC5) remain, albeit with some modifications to their provisions.
- 2.2 The material policy modifications made to the final version of MCNP2 are:

MC2

- 2.3 The Draft Environmental Report (§8.47) recommended the policy includes a specific reference to the Ardley Conservation Area adjoining the site boundary. This has been done. The policy also now allows for approx. 8, rather than 6 dwellings.

MC2, MC3 & MC4

- 2.4 The Draft Environmental Report (§8.32) and some comments made during the consultation recommended that these three policies are bolstered in terms of their flood risk provisions in the light of the most recently published Environment Agency mapping data on surface water flooding. This has been done for all three policies.

MC2, MC5, MC6 & MC7

2.5 The Draft Environmental Report (§8.56) recommended the policy draws attention to the minerals safeguarding provisions affecting the allocated site in the policy wording. This has been done for all four policies. It is understood the MCNPF continues to regard the potential risk of sterilising minerals deposits by small housing schemes on the very edge of the deposit (workable or otherwise) as being overstated by the minerals authority and outweighed by the public benefit of delivering new homes in the village.

MC3 & MC4

2.6 The Draft Environmental Report (§8.46) and some comments made during the consultation noted the potential for significant negative heritage effects in relation to these Kirtlington policies. The evidence base has since been improved with the addition of a new heritage assessment commissioned from independent consultants by MCNPF.

2.7 The report validates the views of the MCNP2 Kirtlington sub-group that was formed to assess the various sites put forward for consideration around the village. It is noted that they and it consider the significance of the listed Park & Garden designation in this specific location has been overstated given what they allege was an error in how firstly the boundary of the asset was drawn and consequently that of the revised Conservation Area.

2.8 The report considers that the case against the inclusion of the MC3 site within the coincident and designated Park & Garden and Conservation Area boundaries (and therefore of MC4 adjoining those boundaries) is compelling and the error should be corrected in due course. It therefore concludes that the development principles set out in policies MC3 and MC4 would reduce the level of 'less than substantial harm' from significant to moderate.

MC5 & MC6

2.9 Each of these policies now allows for 'approx. 15', rather than '10-15' dwellings to improve their clarity.

Other Draft Environmental Report Recommendations

2.10 The Draft Environmental Report also recommended some other policy changes, which have not been incorporated for the following reasons:

- Climate change (§8.35) – although the flood risk elements have been incorporated, the remaining elements (e.g. sustainable new design and support for community renewable energy schemes), have not on the basis that other development plan and national policies already cover those development management provisions to the extent considered necessary for this neighbourhood area.
- Historic environment (§8.48) – there is no new development management heritage policy as there was not the resource to evidence a policy (which may have required a further consultation as well) and it was not considered a policy would add any material value to established development plan and national policies
- Transport (§8.76) – new requirements for transport infrastructure have not been set as the site-specific evidence at this plan making stage is insufficient to do so.

3. ASSESSMENT

3.1 The material policy modifications have been assessed against the findings of the Draft Environmental Report. It is considered that:

- The modifications in respect of addressing surface water flood risk at the affected sites will change the overall effects of the policies to neutral with the possibility that one or more of the schemes leading to improvements to the way that this risk is managed in the future compared to the status quo, and so having minor positive effects
- The modifications in respect of addressing heritage matters at Kirtlington (together with new evidence) and Ardley are sufficient to reduce the effects from significant to moderate negative, without the need for an additional heritage management policy
- The modifications in respect of addressing minerals safeguarding matters at Steeple Aston and Ardley the addition of specific policy wording to draw attention to the matter is considered helpful but does not alter the overall assessment of minor negative effects on land resources
- The modifications in respect of very slightly higher housing capacity numbers on some sites are assessed as not making a significant difference to their respective various effects
- The absence of one or more new climate change related policy provisions is assessed as not changing the overall climate change effects as it is agreed that such provisions are increasingly well catered for in local and national policy with less discretion available to neighbourhood plans to establish such policy at the very local level

3.2 In respect of the Kirtlington heritage effects, we have no reason to come to a different view to the heritage assessment as we are not aware of any evidence on the Park designation boundary to the contrary. It is for MCNPF to judge how to balance the moderate level of 'less than substantial' harm concluded by our assessment against the public benefits, but it is noted the modified wording of both policies is now clearer in drawing specific attention to the matter. A future planning application must therefore satisfy the decision maker that the full scheme details are consistent with this and the other policy provisions. As a result, we are able to assess the modified policies as not having the potential for significant adverse heritage effects.

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) other than to lead to neutral (rather than minor negative) climate change and flood risk effects and to moderate (rather than moderate to significant) negative heritage effects. It is not considered that its recommendations in respect of climate change, heritage or transport are necessary to alter their respective effects conclusions.

4.2 The Plan Finalisation and Monitoring content of Section 10 of the Draft Environmental Report remain unaltered.