

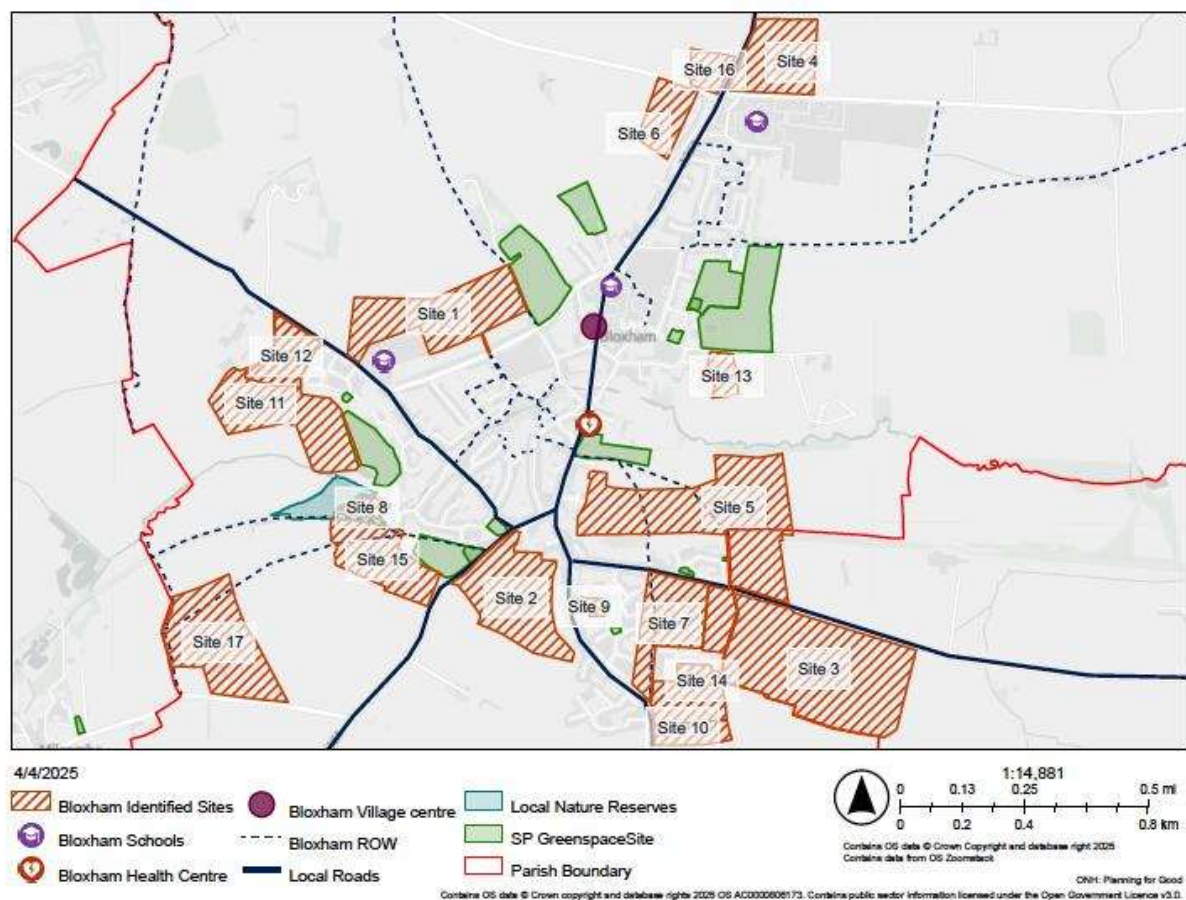
# APPENDIX A: SITE ASSESSMENT & SELECTION

## Introduction

1. This note summarises the process adopted by the Parish Council in assessing and selecting sites for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), and its integration with the parallel Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

## Site Assessment

2. The assessment process began in February 2025 and comprised firstly using the 2024 HELAA output from CDC to generate a long list of 17 potential sites in the Parish, which included one site adjoining the village but in neighbouring Milton Parish (Site 3; HELAA096). The sites are shown on Plan A below with their NP site numbers. There was no need for a new 'call for sites' as the CDC data was considered sufficiently up to date and comprehensive in its coverage. Where some HELAA site boundaries overlapped they have been simplified into a single site.



*Plan A: Long List of Sites for Assessment*

No.	HELAA No.	Site Name
1	094	E of Tadmarton Road
2	467	E of South Newington Road
4	097	N of Bloxham
5	518	N/S of Milton Road
6	099	S of Ell's Lane
8	291	Brookside Way
9	357	Orchard House
10	464	E of Barford Road 1
11	474	W of Tadmarton Road 1
12	475	W of Tadmarton Road 2
13	503	Ridgeway House
14	504	E of Barford Road 2
15	534	W of South Newington Road
17	188	Oak View Milcombe

3. The long list was then filtering to delete sites that had secured planning permission since then (Sites 7 and 16) as they will be counted by the NP as existing commitments in the plan period and would not require an allocation.

4. The filtered list of 14 sites was sent to AECOM in April 2025 to carry out a 'site options assessment'. Site 3 was not included as it lies outside the plan boundary for this purpose, but the Parish Council remains mindful that its scale and location could have affected its site selection decision later in the process.

5. The site options assessment concluded that ten sites were potentially suitable for allocation. The four sites AECOM considered unsuitable were sites 8, 11, 13 and 17 and the Parish Council had no evidence to dispute that assessment. And of those 10 sites, one (Site 2) has since secured planning consent for 130 homes and so has also been discounted from further consideration.

6. The focus was then on understanding the basis of the AECOM assessment and recommendations by correcting any assumptions and by supplementing them with additional information. This information comprised the Parish Council's published 'Community Benefits List' of 2023, its initiative to anticipate the effect of new housing development on the village's social and transport infrastructure. Six of those benefits could be delivered as legitimate planning policy requirements (by allocating land and/or using S106 financial contributions):

- Expansion of Bloxham Primary School on Tadmarton Road
- Traffic management works along High Street
- Improvements to school parking at Grove Road
- Provision of a new library
- Additional burial ground and allotments land
- Additional public sports pitches land

7. At that time, it was not considered important to prioritise these benefits. But, with events in the last year meaning that the village has to accommodate another significant increase in new homes and population, the Parish Council has judged that increasing the capacity of the village primary school was its most important priority.

8. The Parish Council also invited the land interests of the nine sites to submit any further information on their site development ideas or proposals, so that it could also take that into consideration for delivering these benefits, as well as to deliver mitigation measures.

9. This additional information has qualified and supplemented the AECOM report in the following ways:

- Site 1 – importantly, two adverse effects it identified can be corrected: the land interest has committed to providing land for the expansion of the school so there will be no prejudicing of that potential, and to connecting the site with the adjoining PRow, which will mean all the developable land will lie within a safe and convenient 400m walking distance of the village centre. The land interest has also offered land for a burial ground and for a potential future community use of the existing barn (once its established agricultural use has ended), as well as the creation of a new public vantage point at Hobb Hill with significant woodland and other planting to manage the sensitive landscape transition and to re-route the overhead power cables.
- Site 4 – the land interest has not proposed any additional benefits to the 100 homes proposed and the means of containing the harmful locational and landscape effects appear difficult to overcome. It has not indicated if it would be willing to provide a new public car park for the schools opposite.
- Site 5 – the land interest has submitted additional information that addresses a number of the effects identified by AECOM and proposes a total of approx. 230 homes, perhaps with a first phase of 90 homes. Importantly, it also proposes the delivery of three listed benefits on site – land for a burial ground, allotments/orchard and a new community facility (e.g library).
- Site 6 – there has been no additional information provided by the land interest to show if and how landscape and access mitigation measures will be delivered.
- Site 9 – this is a small PDL site within the settlement boundary and so can come forward without an allocation in the plan
- Site 10 – there has been no additional information provided and it is noted the site is not part of the planning application submitted for Site 14, on which the report considers it depends as a coherent extension to the village.
- Site 12 – the planning application for 60 homes is being reconsidered. It includes a new public open space and play area on the site frontage and flood risk and landscape mitigation measures. No other community benefit.
- Site 14 – the planning application for 100 homes has been submitted. It makes provision for attenuation land to address flood risk and some boundary landscaping but is neither large enough nor well located to deliver a community benefit.

- Site 15 – the land interest has proposed 100 homes for the site but no other community benefit. Whilst it may be possible to address the flood, landscape and access issues, the site has only the most tenuous visual connection to the village form (on the opposite side of the recreation ground) and is likely neither large enough nor well located to deliver a community benefit.

10. The AECOM report assumed that the capacity of the larger sites should be lowered in order to fall within the Local Plan 75 homes indicative figure. For the reasons outlined below, this assumption has been disregarded in the site selection process and the fact that some sites have been made available for a larger number has not put them at a disadvantage. However, the Parish Council has assessed the extent to which a proposal can deliver benefits directly on site as opposed to making financial contributions to the delivery of the benefit elsewhere.

## Site Selection

11. The Parish Council has been placed in a difficult position by the number of major housing proposals that have been, and continue to be, made on land around the village over the last two years, prompted by CDC's struggle to maintain an up to date Local Plan and five year housing land supply position. It has also had to be mindful that the (NPPF §70) indicative housing figure proposed for the village in the emerging Local Plan (75 homes) is being overtaken by events and has yet to be examined.

12. It therefore needs to exert its planning judgement in a way that plans positively for future housing growth in the village over the next decade or more on the one hand, but on the other that reflects the village status in the settlement hierarchy; its location very close to the largest town in CDC – Banbury; its infrastructure capacity limitations; and its essential, special historic and rural character.

13. The Standard Method for calculating housing supply is now stock based and so it is possible to calculate a housing figure of 21.8 homes/annum for Bloxham, based on its Census 2021 housing stock of 1,400 homes and using the Cherwell affordability ratio and adjustment factor. Although only a starting point to determine a longer term indicative housing figure for the village, it seems a sensible figure to plan for without undermining strategic policy.

14. For the ten year plan period from April 2024 (from when CDC is calculating housing supply) to March 2034 the NP should provide for approx. 218 homes. With 160 homes already consented in that period (on sites 2 and 16) this requires land to be allocated for at least 58 homes for CDC to be confident in engaging NPPF §14 in determining future housing proposals.

15. From the assessment work summarised above the sites can be divided into three types: those that will directly deliver one or more community benefits; those that cannot by way of their size and/or location; and those that are relatively inconsequential and

only worthy of further consideration if their housing capacity is needed to achieve the indicative figure.

16. The first type comprises Site 1 and Site 5. Both would enable the village to grow and at the same time deliver the kind of step change in infrastructure capacity that this growth (and recent growth) will require to maintain a sustainable village that is not exporting students, patients and those seeking community facilities to access local services.

17. Site 1 would enable an important social infrastructure issue to be addressed – the expansion of the school, for which S106 funds are already being collected from approved schemes. Delivering a new primary school in Bloxham would only be necessary if the village were to double in size, which is neither appropriate nor planned for the foreseeable future. Land has been made available for a new burial ground and for another community use once the barn is no longer needed for its agricultural use. A well-designed scheme at the foot of Hobb Hill that assimilates the scheme into the village fabric and connects to the PRoW network and village centre nearby will deliver these benefits and 125 homes. The additional homes will allow the Parish Council to extend the plan period to 13 years, i.e. to 2037.

18. Site 5 would also deliver some benefits on the list – a new community facility, allotments and burial space – and would continue the eastern expansion of the village along Milton Road. However, it will ultimately need to supply 230 homes in return for those benefits, using some development parcels well beyond a 400m walk from the village centre. And again, the scheme could help fund primary school expansion but could not deliver it and would place greater pressure on catchment area places. Its homes would enable the plan period to be extended to 2042.

19. The second type of site comprises Sites 4, 12 and 14. It is possible that each could deliver new homes and some mitigation to meet the immediate needs of the schemes themselves and provide financial contributions to other infrastructure improvements. Were the Parish Council looking only to plan for the lowest housing number from among the 'least worst' sites (in terms of constraints) then selecting one or more may be appropriate. The problem, however, is that none of the sites offer a solution to improving the capacity of the village infrastructure to accommodate growth; they will simply add to those problems and require CDC to resolve that using their financial contributions.

20. The third type of site comprises Sites 6, 9, 10 and 15. Their location and their size means that they have the least to contribute to a sustainable vision of Bloxham. None would be required to meet the indicative figure if one or two of any of the first or second type of sites are selected.

21. It was therefore concluded that only Sites 1 and 5 could be considered reasonable alternatives and they were assessed as such by the separate SEA, also carried out by AECOM as part of the wider assessment of the draft policies. The SEA indicated both sites have the potential for positive and adverse effects that could be mitigated through allocation policy requirements.

22. The Parish Council chose to allocate Site 1 as it would directly deliver the most important benefit in the only plausible location and deliver other community benefits.

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