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OUNDLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY ON GREEN SPACES

OBJECTIVE:

To safeguard existing green spaces and, where possible, provide additional or enhanced facilities within existing or new developments.

The location of Oundle within the **Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area** (one of 12 such areas established in 2012 and covering an area of 41,000 hectares) needs to be reflected in the policies adopted for green space within the town and the town's relationship to the countryside around it. The policies on green space form a key part in the Town Design Statement and there is a clear overlap with that part of the Neighbourhood Plan dealing with Sport and Leisure. These policies must take into account and be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (currently under review).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK:

The **NPPF** has a number of provisions relating to green space:

74. Existing green space, sports and recreational buildings and land including playing fields should not be built on unless

An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements or

The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location or

The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

76. Local communities through Local and Neighbourhood Plans should be able to identify for special protection green spaces of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development except in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should, therefore, be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed and be capable of existing beyond the end of the plan period.

77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces. The designation should only be used

Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves

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Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife and

Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031 draft pre-submission plan:

The **NNJCS** has many provisions relating to Green Space and Green Infrastructure including:

The Place Shaping Principles for North Northamptonshire Towns states that:

The provision of new open spaces should relate both to accessibility through it and the local characteristics of open spaces with the potential for fewer larger spaces on some open sites.

Para. 3.82

Open spaces can take many forms from formal sports facilities to green spaces within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreational benefits to people living and working nearby, have an ecological value and contribute towards green infrastructure.

Para. 3.83

Natural greenspaces are places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate. The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (Natural England) recommends that everyone should have publicly accessible areas of natural greenspace of at least 2 ha. in size no more than 300m. from home, at least one 20 ha. site within 2 km. from home and at least one accessible 100 ha. site within 5 km. of home.

Para. 3.85

The Woodland Trust's recommended Woodland Access Standard recommends that everyone should have a wood of at least 2 ha. within 500 metres from home and at least one accessible 20 ha. site within 4 km. from home.

Para. 3.87

Public open spaces and other green spaces provide a major component of broader "community assets". Individual areas of open space will be designated for protection through part 2 Local Plans or neighbourhood plans.

Para. 3.88

Green areas identified through local assessments as being of particular importance to the community may also be designated through part 2 Local Plans or neighbourhood plans.

Specific policies include the following:

Policy 2

The distinctive North Northants historic environment will be protected, preserved and, where appropriate, enhanced. Where development would impact upon a heritage asset and/or its setting

- (a) Proposals should conserve and, where possible, enhance the heritage significance and setting of an asset or group of heritage assets in a manner commensurate to its significance
- (b) Proposals should complement their surrounding historic environment through the form, scale, design and materials
- (c) Proposals should protect and, where possible, enhance key views and vistas of heritage assets including of the church spires along the Nene Valley and across North Northamptonshire
- (d) Proposals should demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the impact of development upon heritage assets and their setting in order to minimise harm to these assets and their setting.
- (e) Where appropriate flexible solutions to the re-use of buildings and conservation of other types of heritage assets at risk will be encouraged especially where this will result in their removal from the 'at risk' register.

Policy 3 Landscape Character

Development should be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to its landscape setting retaining and where possible enhancing the distinctive qualities of the landscape character area in which it would be situated or viewed from.

Development should

- (a) Conserve and where possible enhance the character and qualities of the local landscape through appropriate design and management
- (b) Make provision for the retention and where possible enhancement of features of landscape importance
- (c) Safeguard and where possible enhance important views and vistas including skylines within the development layout
- (d) Protect the landscape setting and contribute to maintaining the individual and distinct character and separate identities of settlements by preventing coalescence
- (e) Provide appropriate landscape mitigation and/or suitable off site enhancements.

Policy 7 Community Services and Facilities

Development should support and enhance community facilities and assets where appropriate by

- (b) Providing accessible greenspaces in accordance with Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards and accessible woodland in accordance with the Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standards unless local standards have been adopted.

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(d) Not resulting in a net loss of open space, allotments, sports and recreation buildings and land including playing fields unless (i) the facility is surplus to requirements or (ii) a site of equivalent quality and accessibility will be provided, serviced and made available to the community or (iii) the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.

The Neighbourhood Plan deals with the period 2021 to 2031 and, therefore, extends the period covered by the Local Plan (the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan) and effectively replaces that plan so far as Oundle is concerned. Policies from that Plan can be applied to inform the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan.

THE RURAL NORTH OUNDLE AND THRAPSTON PLAN

Appendix 6 sets out seven categories of Green Space as follows:

Amenity Green Space

Sports Facilities

Parks and Gardens

Allotments and Community Gardens

Cemeteries and Churchyards

Provision for Children and Young People

Natural and Semi-natural

It identifies the following sites in Oundle as being of high value (in terms of quality and accessibility) or of very good quality against the benchmark quality indicator namely:

Oundle Bowling Club and the Herne Road Playing Fields (Sports facilities)

Oundle School Memorial Garden (Parks and Gardens).

It shows 9 areas of important open land namely:

Land to the east of Station Road including the land occupied by the Oundle Town Football Club

Land off Milton Road occupied by Oundle Town Cricket Club

Land south of Benefield Road (known as Millers Field)

Land north of Stoke Doyle Road (known as Spraggs Field)

Land south of Stoke Doyle Road

Land south of South Road

Land north of South Road (Cobthorne Gardens)

Land lying between St. Osyth's Lane and South Road (part of Bramston Paddock)

Land off Blackpot Lane (the garden of Gardenways, an ancient monument).

There is a key policy (EN20) from the 1996 Local Plan which was saved and retained as policy 12 of the RNOTP:

Planning permission will not be granted for development which adversely affects open land of particular significance to the form and character of a town or village as identified by one or more of the following criteria:

- (i) The land contributes to the retention of the existing form and character of a particular settlement
- (ii) The land provides an important open area within a settlement which separates distinct groups of buildings or parts of the settlement
- (iii) The land contributes to the setting of a listed building, a building of townscape quality, ancient monument or landscape feature or contributes to the character of a conservation area
- (iv) The land allows views into the settlement from approach roads or open countryside, views into the countryside from within the settlement and/or views across the different parts of the settlement.

In order that the objective of this Neighbourhood Plan can be achieved it is appropriate to adopt RNOTP policy 12 within it so that no development which adversely affects open land of particular significance to the form and character of Oundle shall take place.

The Open Space Sport and Recreation Study (2006):

This was prepared by PMP for East Northamptonshire Council and has informed the principles of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Amenity Green Space:

This includes informal recreation spaces and greenspace in and around housing with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancing the appearance of residential or other areas.

The minimum standard recommended is 0.8 ha. per 1000 people. Amenity Greenspace in Oundle exceeded this with the majority of residents within the suggested catchment.

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The Study reported that in Oundle the perception was that small amenity green spaces within new housing estates have little value encouraging delinquency and anti-social behaviour within the estate.

Sports Facilities:

These include both indoor (including sports halls, swimming pools and health and fitness studios) and outdoor (including both natural and artificial surfaces for sport and recreation which are either privately or publicly owned) sports facilities.

The recommended local standard for outdoor facilities is 1.69 ha. per 1000 population.

The highest scoring outside facility in East Northamptonshire was the Herne Road Playing Fields (both high quality and high accessibility). Oundle Bowling Club was above the benchmark quality indicator but Oundle Tennis Club was below it.

The Study reported some concern with access to facilities in Oundle.

All residents in Oundle are within the drive time of an outdoor sports facility.

The recommended local standard for indoor facilities is 49.52 square metres per 1000 population within 15 minutes.

The Study reported that access to indoor facilities was a recurring theme in East Northamptonshire particularly in Oundle.

The recommended local standard for swimming pool provision is 10.48 square metres per 1000 population.

Swimming pool provision in Oundle is contained in the Oundle School Sports Centre (one of 8 sites in East Northamptonshire) but is limited to club use only.

The recommended local standard for health and fitness provision is 14.58 square metres per 1000 population within 15 minutes drive time.

Health and fitness provision in Oundle is contained in 3 locations (out of 19 locations in East Northamptonshire): Prince William School (public), Just Fit (private) and Oundle School Sports Centre (restricted membership).

Parks and Gardens:

These include urban parks, formal gardens and country parks that provide opportunities for various informal recreational and community events within settlement boundaries.

Although there is no country park within Oundle itself Barnwell Country Park lies just outside the town. It has been awarded green flag status (national recognition of the quality of the park). It was developed from abandoned gravel workings and is now a peaceful mixture of lakes, riverside, meadows and marshland. The Study suggests that it should be considered to be a site of good practice and a useful quality benchmark for parks and gardens within East Northamptonshire,

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The recommended local standard is 0.6 ha. per 1000 population with accessibility within 15 minutes walking.

Provision in Oundle is below the minimum standard although the majority of the residents in Oundle are within the accepted catchment of parks and gardens with the exception of residents living at the northern edge of the town.

Oundle School Memorial Chapel Garden is above the benchmark quality indicator.

Allotments and Community Gardens:

These include all forms of allotments with a primary purpose to allow people to grow their own produce.

The recommended local standard is 0.34 ha. per 1000 population with accessibility within 15 minutes walking.

The Study reported latent demand in Oundle and a shortfall in the current level of provision.

Oundle's allotments are rated average against the benchmark quality standard.

Provision for Children and Young People:

This includes equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with the primary purpose of providing opportunities for play and social interaction.

East Northamptonshire Council requires developers building 15 or more dwellings to provide children's play areas amounting to 252 square metres and developers building 50 or more to include a LEAP (Locally Equipped Area for Play).

The recommended local standard is 0.1 ha. per 1000 population (urban) with accessibility within 10 minutes walk.

Oundle compares favourably to other places in East Northamptonshire in terms of provision and the play area in the War Memorial Recreation Ground is considered to be the most accessible in East Northamptonshire. Although the skate park was not one of the highest scoring in terms of quality the Study reported that consultation reinforced the value of this resource.

Cemeteries and Churchyards:

Churchyards are encompassed within the walled boundary of a church. Cemeteries are burial grounds outside the confines of a church and include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. Their primary purpose is for the burial of the dead and for quiet contemplation but they also promote wildlife conservation and diversity.

There is no recommended local standard for provision or accessibility.

St. Peter's Churchyard was noted as the most accessible in East Northamptonshire.

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The Jesus Church was rated average against the benchmark quality indicator.

Natural and Semi-natural:

This includes woodlands, open forestry, scrubland, grasslands, wetlands, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity within the settlement boundaries.

The recommended local standard for provision is 1.30 ha. per 1000 population (urban) with accessibility within 15 minutes walk.

Oundle is under the recommended local standard with a lack of provision to the south east of the town although it has two pocket parks: the War Memorial Recreation Ground off New Road (outdoor sports facilities typology) and Snipe Meadow (natural and semi-natural) which perform a dual role providing natural and semi-natural areas in a formalised setting.

Provision in Oundle falls below the minimum quantitative standard for natural and semi-natural open space although the Barnwell Country Park just outside Oundle contains areas of natural space although classified as a Park and Garden.

The Oundle Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire posed 3 green space questions:

- (a) where should additional cemetery space be located?
- (b) where should allotments be located?
- (c) what types of open green space should be incorporated into new developments?

It also asked respondents to indicate the six most important green spaces to protect from future development of any sort.

Overwhelmingly respondents indicated that additional cemetery space should be adjacent to the existing provision.

Two potential sites for allotments were detailed in the questionnaire: Miller's Field, Benefield Road (site 11) where there is already some provision and land north of Benefield Road (as part of site 15N) but of those responding most suggested land north of St. Peter's Road (part of site 23) with the second most suggested site being at Spragg's Field (site 5) and the third (equal) being Miller's Field (site 11) and land between St. Christopher's Drive and the A605 bypass (site 1).

The preferred type of open green space in new developments was for wildlife meadows with children's play areas second and playing fields third.

The importance of the Barnwell Country Park which lies just outside the parish of Oundle to the people of the town could be seen by the number of respondents suggesting that this was the most

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important open space to be preserved. The responses indicated not surprising support for the preservation of all existing green spaces within the town but the responses did also show some key themes:

- (i) the retention of the War Memorial Recreation Ground/ Snipe Meadow Pocket Park; the Occupation Road sports clubs (rugby, bowls and tennis) and the football ground in Station Road
- (ii) the preservation of the views from the North Bridge and the approaches to Oundle from the Peterborough direction of the open land between the wharf and the football ground
- (iii) the preservation of the views from the North Bridge and the approaches to Oundle from the Peterborough direction of not only the land referred to in (i) above but extending beyond to the land north of St. Peter's Road and east of Cotterstock Road (site 23)
- (iv) the retention of Oundle School's South Road playing field
- (v) the preservation of the open land along the Stoke Doyle Road including site 12
- (vi) the preservation as open green space of Miller's Field (site 11) and Spragg's Field (site 5).

Apart from the above a few respondents made specific reference to the following sites being promoted for residential development: land south of Benefield Road (15S), north of Benefield Road (15N) and south of Wakerley Close (14).

Other responses included: Home Close off Glapthorn Road, the playing field adjacent to Abbot House, St. Peter's Churchyard, the Cricket Club off Milton Road, Heron Rogers Wood and the Chapel Lawns.

There did not appear to be any concern about any loss of green space arising from the residential developments of sites 1 and/or 3 and/or 4. This may indicate that respondents saw no objection to developing up to the A605 bypass in that area of the town.

EXISTING GREEN SPACES

The plan shows the location of the existing green spaces within Oundle, the existing settlement boundary and the parish boundary. The plan indicates:

- (a) green spaces in the ownership of Oundle Town Council
- (b) green spaces in the ownership of Oundle School
- (c) green spaces owned/used by other schools
- (d) the allotments off Benefield Road.

The green spaces owned by Oundle Town Council

These are as follows:

Land in Occupation Road leased to Oundle Tennis Club, Oundle Bowls Club and Oundle Rugby Club.

The War Memorial Recreation Ground off New Road.

The St. Christopher's Drive Play area.

The Rock Road amenity area.

Snipe Meadow.

The Churchyard and the Cemetery.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment included part of the land in Occupation Road (site 551) and the St. Christopher's Drive play area (site 491). Oundle Town Council has not sought to promote either site for residential development in the plan period. The redevelopment of the land in Occupation Road would be unacceptable without adequate alternative facilities being made available and policy 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework applies. The policy also applies to the use of the St. Christopher's Drive play area. This area is regarded as an important open space/leisure facility for the existing residential development and the importance of retaining the play area would increase if there was to be residential development on site 1 (land east of St. Christopher's Drive).

Oundle Town Council's policy in recent years has been not to accept ownership of and responsibility for play areas constructed on residential developments nor to accept ownership of green spaces forming part of residential developments although it does own the St. Christopher's Drive play area and the War Memorial Recreation Ground.

The St. Christopher's Drive play area is an open green recreational space laid to grass and planted with varied species of trees and a few shrubs. It is surrounded by a picket fence which is attractive and which is helped to blend in with the surroundings by the planting. The space is pear shaped, sloped and the level is varied a little at the bottom. The planting successfully combines different shapes and colour for interest during several seasons. The pear shape along with varying levels, planting and lawns adds interest and opportunity for passive and active recreation.

The Recreation Ground is designated a Pocket Park and is a large, mainly grassed open space but features several skate ramps, a basketball hoop with hardstanding area, football pitch and a range of children's play equipment. The trees in this area are important as they soften the hard surfaces of the built up area and provide extra play opportunities and shade.

The Town Council also owns and manages the Snipe Meadow pocket park which features a wooden pathway bisecting protected marshland leading to the River Nene. As well as promoting biodiversity this is a very attractive wildlife environment to walk through to access the river. The wooden boardwalk is attractive and the openness of the space is pleasing with important long distance views of the River Nene and the river bank. This is an important access point for residents to enjoy the connecting river walk along public footpath UF1/ME3 which is regularly used. Access to the River Nene and the surrounding countryside is a very important characteristic of the town.

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Oundle Town Council leases land off Occupation Road to the town's Rugby, Bowling and Tennis Clubs. The rugby pitches are used very regularly as are the bowling green and tennis courts providing social and health benefits for many children and adults living within the town. The rugby pitches provide a pleasant open greenspace for local residents who can access them via public footpath UF2 and Occupation Road.

Oundle Town Council does not currently own or have responsibility for any allotments. The allotments forming part of site 11 (land off Benefield Road known as Miller's Field) are in private ownership and made available for use as allotments by the owner. In promoting the site for residential development the owner has proposed re-siting the allotments to the rear of the proposed housing and gifting land to the town council to be used for allotments, a nature conservation area, paths, play and/or recreation.

The cemetery owned by Oundle Town Council is nearing capacity and the council would, therefore, like to extend it to ensure that there will be adequate provision throughout the plan period. Site 12 (land adjacent to the cemetery off Stoke Doyle Road) has been promoted for residential development and if permitting development on this site would result in the provision of land which could form an extension to the cemetery (which has been proposed by the site owner) this could be regarded as a desirable outcome. The promoter of site 15N has proposed that part of the site could be made available for woodland burials which would provide a facility not currently available in the parish.

The green spaces owned by Oundle School

The plan illustrates the extent of the land owned by Oundle School. Some of this land was included in the **SHLAA** as follows:

Site 544: land east of Ship Lane being the rear gardens of Cobthorne (the headmaster's home).

Site 549: land south of Braunstno Howe (sic) being the rear garden of Bramston House.

Site 1122: land to the north of South Road being the Bramston Close paddock.

Site 555: land at Milton Road being the land leased to Oundle Town Cricket Club.

Site 488: land off Milton Road being the gardens of the Oundle School Memorial Chapel.

Oundle School has not promoted any of these sites for residential development and, therefore, none of them are considered to be deliverable in the plan period.

Cobthorne (1700) is a Grade 1 listed building and any kind of development, residential or otherwise, of any of its rear garden would be inappropriate despite the lack of public access. The property is home to the Head Teacher of Oundle School. The views from the property across the playing field off South Road belonging to Oundle School would be adversely impacted by any development of that playing field which should be retained as open green space.

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Bramston House (1701) is a Grade 2* listed building and any kind of development, residential or otherwise, of any of its rear garden would be inappropriate despite the lack of public access. This Queen Anne town house is used by the school as a boarding house. Beyond the house and garden lies the paddock which has been partially developed with some staff residential accommodation. Much of this area lies behind high stone walls in St. Osyth's Lane and South Road and is, therefore, largely unseen. Any further development within this area would need to be limited and undertaken in ways sympathetic to its location given the proximity of Bramston House.

The land off Milton Road leased to the Oundle Town Cricket Club also lies behind high stone walls and views into it are, therefore, limited. The promoter of a site for residential development south of Herne Road (site 3) has proposed developing roughly half that site as a new cricket ground and if this development was to be permitted this would allow the cricket club to relocate in accordance with NPPF 74. Although in a more peripheral and less accessible location than the Milton Road ground the site could be developed so as to provide a replacement facility making equivalent or better provision. Development of the Milton Road site should only be permitted once the proposed new cricket ground is available for use. The most likely use would be for the construction of a new boarding house. There are already a number of such houses located on either side of Milton Road namely St. Anthony (south side) and Grafton & Sidney and Fisher & Crosby (north side). If so developed as much green space around the new building as possible should be retained in line with the existing provision at the other boarding house off Milton Road.

The memorial gardens around the Oundle School Memorial Chapel (which is grade 2* listed) extend to the Glaphorn Road and within this area in addition to the Chapel itself there are two other important school buildings: the Yarrow Gallery and the Sir Peter Scott building both of which are listed. Any development, residential or otherwise, in this area would adversely impact upon the Chapel and these other buildings. Views of these magnificent landscaped gardens with their manicured lawns, shrubberies and mature trees provide a contrast to the tight urban form of the town centre. They add character and a sense of spaciousness to the town. The pathways meandering through the lawns give a sense of journey and a relaxed feeling. The low hedging and wrought iron gates allow stunning views.

The School owns large tracts of land north of Milton Road and of Benefield Road much of which is green space and used by the school for sporting/recreational purposes. This includes Heron Rogers Wood which was originally planted in the 1960s as a memorial to Lieutenant John Heron Rogers (a former pupil of Oundle School who was killed in the Second World War). This is an important green space and must be properly managed and conserved and should remain free of built development of any kind. The Oundle Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009) describes the open green spaces beyond Milton Road as providing "a contrast to the tight urban grain of the principal streets (of the conservation area)". It refers to the "cascading of scale and building form from the tightly built up town centre towards the green open spaces around its edges" as being "particularly noticeable" and providing "a pleasing contrast". The Oundle Hockey Club uses the School's astroturf facility included within the various sports pitches in this area. Some previously open land to the north formerly owned by Oundle School was allocated for residential development by the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan. Part of this land is under development and the remaining site has been granted planning permission for housing.

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The Home Close green space lies east of Glapthorn Road between the SciTec complex and the Dryden boarding House and because of its open aspect can be seen from the road. Oundle School have made this available for community use on occasions. It is an important green space principally because of its visual amenity and provides an attractive “green lung” adding to the spacious feel and the beauty of the town and should not be developed residentially or otherwise. It complements the gardens of the Yarrow Gallery on the west side of Glapthorn Road.

To the north of the Great Hall off Milton Road lies Viney’s Garden. This and the remainder of the gardens surrounding Oundle School’s Great Hall, particularly the highly visible grassed area in front of the Great Hall and opposite the St. Peter’s Churchyard, add a formal atmosphere to the town centre and should remain free from development of any kind.

The Berrystead, built in the late seventeenth century, is a grade 1 listed building on the east side of North Street. Its gardens run back to East Road and any development in those gardens, whether residential or otherwise, would impact adversely upon the Berrystead itself and should not be permitted.

The Oundle Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009) refers to the “sense of openness” evident at the top end of North Street where it widens out to form Station Road “with wide views eastwards over the water meadows”. Part of this land is leased to the Oundle Town Football Club and, therefore, apart from its visual amenity has an important sporting/leisure role protected by NPPF 74. No development whether residential or otherwise should take place even if an alternative location was found to resite the football club because of the adverse visual impact that this would have. The land lying immediately behind the football club land and the land north of it should remain free of built development (notwithstanding the redevelopment of the Wharf site) so that the whole of this area of land between the road and the river remains an open green space.

Oundle School owns an extensive area of land between East Road and the A605 Oundle bypass at least some of which may be suitable for commercial/industrial use.

Oundle School also owns land off South Road and west of Bassett Ford Road/ Riverside Close which is largely undeveloped. This has not been promoted for residential or other development and should remain as it is. The Oundle Junior Football Club uses the South Road pitches.

An area of land off Occupation Road owned by the Grocer’s Company and available to Oundle School is rented to Oundle Rugby Football Club.

Green Spaces owned/used by other schools:

The **SHLAA** includes as site 607 land on either side of Herne Road which on the north side includes the Prince William School playing fields and a small agricultural site being promoted for residential development and on the south side includes agricultural land being promoted for residential development/the development of a replacement or additional cricket ground. The school playing fields have not been promoted for residential development and are not, therefore, considered to be deliverable. Their retention as playing fields for the school is regarded as essential. In order to

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maintain the cohesiveness of the green space on the north side of Herne Road it is suggested that there should be no residential or other development of site 4 .

The Primary School has used land south of Magdalen House and west of Abbott House as a playing field. It has had limited wider community use. It has not been promoted for residential or other development and is not, therefore, considered to be deliverable. When the Primary School relocates from Milton Road to the Middle School site this land would become surplus to requirements. Because of its location adjacent to the Oundle School Memorial Chapel gardens it should not be developed residentially or otherwise in view of the impact it would have upon those gardens and should be retained as open green space and made available for community use.

In order to fund the move of the Primary School to the Middle School site and educational development in Oundle generally Northamptonshire County Council wishes to dispose of some of the existing green space at the Middle School site which it considers would be surplus to requirements notwithstanding the relocation of the Primary School to that site. Following considerable disquiet within the town and in response to a direct request to consider its position in relation to any such land disposal at a meeting on the 21st April 2015 Oundle Town Council resolved to support the opposition to the sale of the playing fields at the new site of Oundle Primary School. It considered that there was a present need for the retention of the land in question for local community use and that the retention of the land as green space would ensure that that land remained available to meet long term needs for land for sporting and recreational purposes for the school as it grows and for the town itself. On the 30th April 2015 the Annual Town Meeting unanimously voted to oppose the sale. A petition opposing the sale attracted around 4000 signatures. The land provides the town and surrounding villages with an important open space, sport and recreation facility and is used by a number of community groups: Oundle Junior Football Club, the Women's and Junior teams of Oundle Town Cricket Club and Chattabox youth group.

The allotments off Benefield Road:

These are contained within site 11 and have been made available by the site owner. They are the only allotment land in Oundle. Oundle Town Council does not control these allotments nor does it have any allotment land of its own. The promoter's proposals for the residential development of this land provide for the relocation within the site of the allotments. The suitability of the alternative provision has been questioned by some of the current allotment users but it should be possible to relocate the allotments within the site allowing some residential development fronting the Benefield Road. The site promoter wishes to build 12 dwellings (mainly 2 bedroomed but to include some 3 bedroomed ones) on the site and if the site is allocated for residential development on that basis has indicated a willingness to gift half the site to the town council for use as allotments, a nature conservation area, paths, play and/or recreation. This would provide a significantly increased area for allotments to that which currently exists. They also propose a right of way for pedestrians and cyclists from the Benefield Road to this gifted area. They suggest that the remainder of the site would be retained for consideration in future planning periods. If the site was to be allocated for residential development on the basis of only 10 2 bedroomed houses they would gift only a third of the total land area to the town council (being the lower land closer to the brook) for use as allotments, a nature conservation area, play and recreation. The proposal would still include a right

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of way from the Benefield Road to the gifted area. They estimate that only half the present number of good allotments could be provided within the gifted land.

Despite the current designation of this land as important open space it is suggested that the residential development of part of the site should be permitted to secure the community benefit for the town which would result from the proposals put forward. Because of the importance of securing adequate allotment provision and of maintaining as much of the site as possible as open green space any residential allocation should result in the largest possible amount of land being transferred to the town council. Unless replacement facilities of at least the same quantity and quality are made available on a different site or sites the residential development of this land should not be permitted unless the current number of existing allotments can be retained. Any residential development should be restricted to the Benefield Road frontage to enable as much of the site as possible to be available for allotments and/or to remain as an open green space

The allotments add interest to the street scene and more visibility would improve the Benefield Road appearance if the site is not developed residentially.

The Conservation Area:

The Oundle Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009) was prepared prior to the enlargement of the Conservation Area. Most of the green space within the Conservation Area is not publicly accessible (eg the gardens of Cobthorne, Bramston House and the Berrystead) but the extension meant that the Oundle School Memorial Chapel Garden was included. The Conservation Area includes a scheduled ancient monument in the gardens of the private residence known as Gardenways off Blackpot Lane which lie behind high stone walls like the gardens of some Oundle School properties.

At the western end of West Street where it forms a junction with Mill Road, Stoke Hill and Benefield Road a large late nineteenth century church (the Jesus Church) sits in a modestly sized churchyard and dominates views along each street. A few mature trees and some planting provides a green space within the built environment. There is an important view of the countryside from the junction of West Street, Mill Road and Stoke Hill which creates a sense of space and helps to connect the town to the countryside and which demonstrates the principle that open views provide a sense of space.

Lying north of the Market Place and east of New Street is the churchyard of St. Peter's Church (a grade 1 listed building) part of which is deliberately kept in a semi natural state. It is a pleasing contrast with the tight urban streetscape with its tranquillity and is notable for its mature trees, high limestone walls and pleasant pathways constructed in soft materials which blend easily with the surroundings. The characteristic statement Scots Pine trees at the New Street entrance create a natural gateway and enhance the sense of arrival.

On the west side of New Street is the Great Hall which features a semi-circular drive and has an open lawned area fronting the street, practically the only such visible open green space in the Conservation Area.

Miller’s Field (site 11) and Spragg’s Field (site 5):

Although within the current built environment both these adjacent sites lie outside the current settlement boundary and outside the Conservation Area. The sites have individually been promoted for residential development and could be developed separately although both have physical constraints.

The proposals for some residential development on Miller’s Field could see the amount of allotment provision increased and in addition the creation of a publicly accessible nature conservation area bordering the Lyveden brook together with a path running alongside the brook. There would be a path from Benefield Road to give access to the allotments and to the nature conservation area beyond. Restricting the residential development to the frontage of the site to the Benefield Road and ensuring a sight line or lines through the development from the Benefield Road would help to ameliorate the loss of some green space.

Spragg’s Field is close to the Dairy Farm, Stoke Hill site allocated for residential development in the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan. The retention of this sloping site as a green space even if part of site 11 was to be developed residentially would enable the retention of at least some of the impressive view from the town into the countryside and vice versa.

The visual appearance of this area would be improved by the restoration of the long collapsed wall on the opposite side of the road to Spragg’s Field by the bridge.

Land to the west and to the rear of the Cemetery in Stoke Doyle Road (site 12)/cemetery extension:

The Cemetery will not be able to meet the town’s needs for additional cemetery space without being extended or without some additional provision being made elsewhere. It should, therefore, be a requirement of any future development of the land comprising site 12 that an adequate amount of land to enable the extension of the cemetery is transferred to Oundle Town Council. It is understood that the site owners are amenable to this.

The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire indicated concern about developments off the Stoke Doyle Road impacting upon existing green space including this site. Although it is considered that the residential development of some of this site would be less visually intrusive than some alternative sites as much open space as possible should be preserved and development should not be permitted which would prevent any further extension to the cemetery which might be required after 2031.

The most visually important approaches to Oundle:

Views of the spire of St. Peter’s Church should be preserved and maximised particularly where visible on entry to the town.

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Views of the river, its banks and water meadows that are visible from residential areas should be protected and maximised.

The North and South Bridges:

These are of note due to the effect of the River Nene on the road layout. Short and long distance views of the old town bridges should be preserved.

The only way into the town from the south is over the long narrow medieval bridge, South Bridge, which is a scheduled ancient monument. Stunning views of the river and its banks of hedges and trees teeming with wildlife can be seen when crossing the bridge. These and other beautiful views of the wild landscape of the river bank are an important aspect of the character of the town and must be preserved.

From the east North Bridge, the only bridge over the river, is similarly long providing views over the redeveloped former wharf and the open green space of the river meadows on either side.

The Cotterstock Road:

The fields behind the first houses on this entrance to Oundle slope steeply down to the river meadows and to the River Nene itself and from the road there are stunning open views to the river and beyond. The land allows views into the settlement from approach roads and open countryside and views into the countryside from within the settlement. These views should be preserved and any residential or other built development on site 23 would therefore need to ensure that the visual impact of any such development is minimised. As much of the present green ring extending from the Riverside Maltings to the Occupation Road sports clubs and the land beyond to the Cotterstock Road as possible should be maintained in the light of the responses to the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire. Although the developer promoting the site for development has indicated that it could include allotments and in accordance with the standards set by East Northamptonshire Council would be likely to include an area of recreational open space, an area of natural green space and an area of equipped play this might not counterbalance the loss of an important area of agricultural land on the edge of the present built environment or sufficiently ameliorate the adverse visual impact of any development.

Stoke Doyle Road:

A very open approach to Oundle with an entry into the main built environment which takes you immediately into the Conservation Area almost as soon as the bridge is crossed. The transition between the countryside and the built environment is eased by the openness of the Cemetery and by the existence of the undeveloped Spragg's field opposite open countryside on the other side of the road.

Benefield Road:

There are proposals for the residential development of land north and south of the Benefield Road that would impact on the approach to the town particularly site 15S and this site should not be developed by virtue of that impact. The site owner proposes that development of site 15N could include a large and publicly accessible central open green space/festival site which would permit

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good views toward the town and the spire of St. Peter's church. The owner has also suggested that the site could accommodate additional allotment provision and/or a woodland burial area both of which would assist with meeting identified needs. Although the site has been called an area of high landscape value in studies undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners for East Northamptonshire Council it is considered that the visual impact of development on this site would not be significant and would be less intrusive than some other proposed developments and would be ameliorated by the inclusion of the festival site.

Once inside the built environment there is a significant view corridor across Miller's Field and Spragg's Field (two privately owned grass fields that slopes southward) towards Stoke Doyle Road and the countryside beyond, the fields providing an attractive contrast to the hard landscaping of Benefield Road.

It should be appreciated that entrances to the town are also exits from the town which can themselves afford valuable views over open countryside eg the view of fields and trees across to Cotterstock and Tansor from the top of Glapthorn Road heading toward Glapthorn.

Land between St. Christopher's Drive and the A605 (site 1):

Provided that the residential development of this site did not result in the loss of the trees bordering the bypass it is not considered that there should be any concern at the loss of this greenfield site as it would have little impact visually and would cause no loss of amenity.

Land south of Herne Road (site 3):

Although the residential development of this site would have some visual impact it is not considered to be as visually intrusive as certain other sites. The proposal is, in any event, only to develop that part of the site closest to the existing residential properties with the remainder of the site being developed for use as a cricket facility with a main pitch and a training pitch. This would significantly ameliorate the impact of development and secure an important sporting facility for the town. This facility would be sited opposite the Prince William School playing fields and would enable the retention of an open feel in this area. In the circumstances it is not considered that there should be any concern at the partial loss of this greenfield site.

View corridors:

There are many examples of important view corridors in the town. They include the important long distance view from the top of St. Peter' Road (a characteristic high point in the town) from which location are visible the fields and trees in the Nene Valley east towards Ashton Road. There are similar stunning long distance views from the top of Bellamy Road, Lime Avenue, Springfield Road, St. Wilfred's Road, Nene View and New Road in addition to the view from Cotterstock Road referred to above. These views offer important relief from the tight urban form and hard surfaces.

Policy on view corridors and views generally:

No buildings or parts thereof should block a view corridor.

Where an open space allows further long distance views consideration should be given to the preservation of the view and what it adds to the area.

Where views are important boundary treatment should allow visibility for the public.

Views of St. Peter's Church spire should be preserved and maximised particularly where visible on entry to the town.

Views of and access to views of the River Nene should be preserved and maximised.

Where feasible residential and public open space should be oriented towards significant natural features such as the River Nene.

Views of and access to views of woodland should be preserved and encouraged.

The open aspect provided by sports areas should be preserved and maximised.

Policy on Links from the town to the countryside:

Links from the town to the countryside are an important characteristic of the town offering a break from the hard enclosed landscape of the town to the countryside. There should, therefore, be access points and interconnecting pathways to the countryside wherever possible. Existing access points need to be protected and where possible new access points should be incorporated into new residential developments.

Examples include the Benefield Road public footpath leading to the stream and fields behind Wakerley Close; the open pathway and stile from Culme Close to public footpath no. UF11 running to north of Biggin Grange; public footpath UF1 leading to public footpath M29.

Design Policies for Play Areas:

Recreational spaces should encourage both active and passive recreation.

Play areas should be constructed with the context of Oundle and the needs of users in mind. They should blend into the surroundings and should be of a reasonable size and not close to busy roads and should include the innovative planting of indigenous trees and shrubs providing access to both sun and shade. Planting should be planned to allow for the possible maintenance (ie if minimal maintenance is available planting should prevent brambles and weeds from growing).

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