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Q7

Insert any general comments that do not relate to a specific paragraph number or policy in the general comments box below.*If you are suggesting a change is needed to the draft Local Plan or supporting document, it would be helpful if you could include suggested revised wording. If you are commenting on a document supporting the draft Local Plan (such as a topic paper, or the Sustainability Appraisal), please indicate so.

SCO congratulates TVBC planners on this comprehensive document and agrees with most of its content; however, several sections should go further by explaining how the policy is to be implemented. We have one specific objection - to section 5.402 which removes the constraint that any development site must comprise a mix of smaller houses.

SCO's highest priority is to revise the settlement boundary (SB) to exclude a part of Test Valley Farm (TVF) to avoid disputes at a later stage of the planning process. The current SB Inset map 18 includes TVF; TVBC has not yet recorded our position and excluded it from the settlement. Previous discussions with TVBC (Mr Graham Smith, 14 April 2023) concluded that there were lessons to be learnt about communication and engagement as the council produced the next LP. We, in conjunction with Chilbolton Parish Council (CPC), have made the case to exclude TVF from the SB at the earliest opportunity. We trust that not removing it is an oversight and expect the draft plan to be amended accordingly.

SCO strongly supports the LP statement that: 'For the rural area, it will be our communities taking forward locally driven schemes to meet community's needs. The LP will not make allocations to meet this local need.' (sect 3.73) SCO believes that this principle should extend to Neighbourhood Plans (NP) being able to reduce as well as extend the SB set by an LP, which is not currently the case. Hence, in the case of TVF, the SB must either be resolved by TVBC amending its LP now or by granting NPs the ability to reduce their settlement areas as well as extend them.

SCO strongly supports the contention that local planning must be linked with local environment policies and believes that the links in the LP could be strengthened in certain areas.

Overall, SCO endorses the current Chilbolton NP wish to:

- Ensure that new development meets the needs of the local community, preferably by being community-led via CPC;
 - Ensure that any new development is well designed and conserves and enhances the natural and built environment of the Parish; and
 - Safeguard and improve local community facilities, including through partnership working with other organisations and entities.
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Q8

Insert any specific comments in the general comments box below, indicating which paragraph, policy or matter your comments relate to where possible.*If you are suggesting a change is needed to the draft Local Plan or supporting document, it would be helpful if you could include suggested revised wording.

Chapter 2: Vision, key challenges and objectives

Climate crisis. It is imperative that owing to the climate crisis the environment is put at the heart of the planning system so that green outcomes are prioritised. We must protect nature, biodiversity and wildlife habitats of species that live in the environment we share and which are essential to their existence.

Communities. Younger families with childcare commitments are not well catered for; the village has no school, playgroup or healthcare provision, and residents must travel to Andover, Wherwell or Stockbridge.

Transport. SCO agrees that 'The sustainability of our communities is linked to their ability of having easy and safe access to facilities, services and amenities to serve economic and social needs, including shopping, recreation, education, and employment. (sect 2.32) However, our public transport is poor to non-existent. Worse, school buses are limited and persistently under threat of closure; their continuation will be fundamental to young families choosing to move to, or stay in, the village.

SCO believes that support to these services should be a TVBC priority.

Chapter 3 – spatial policy

SCO seeks a community-led planning system that better protects the environment, allows communities to participate in planning their future and delivers the RIGHT HOMES in the RIGHT PLACES with the RIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE.

Policy SS1: settlement boundary (SB): The draft LP states: 'Areas Included/Excluded from SB. Farm complexes have been excluded from the SB which were previously included in the 2016-2029 LP.' (Draft SB Review, page 4, sect 3.1, Table 2) and that: 'Areas for potential inclusion in the boundary will reflect the factual situation of built development on the ground and functional relationship with the settlement. Adopted Local Plan (2016) allocations are included in the settlement boundary.' (Table 4)

SCO notes that the 2 conditions in the latter statement conflict with each other for TVF; it was within the SB in the adopted 2016 Local Plan. However, Appendix 1 shows 'Criteria D Land within the settlement boundary (on the settlement edge)' where it is clear that TVF 'relates better to the countryside than the built form of the settlement.' Moreover, there is no logic in placing a small part of a public right of way (PRoW) within the SB while for most of its length it remains outside.

The situation is exacerbated by the current method of drawing a line surrounding the urbanised area of Chilbolton village on an A4 size ordnance survey base map – this is too basic. It does not define in detail the boundary separating the urbanised area from the countryside.

SCO strongly believes that the SB should finish at the curtilage fences of the west facing properties of Station Road, leaving the whole of the PRoW outside the SB. This issue has been disputed over many years and needs to be resolved.

SCO proposes that decision making on SB's should be devolved to parish councils that have a made NP which aligns with the framework conditions of the LP. As sect 3.73 of the latter states, 'For the rural area, it will be our communities taking forward locally driven schemes to meet community's needs. The LP will not make allocations to meet this local need. The rural area is considered to be those settlements at the settlement hierarchy tiers of 3-4.' SBs should be set to meet local housing needs and thus should be decided by local communities. SCO believes that restricting that power to those with made NPs would safeguard against 'not in my backyard' tendencies.

Draft Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Stage 2 Public Consultation

SCO further proposes that, as TVF adjoins West Down Nature Reserve, there would be a natural symmetry if the section in question also had SINC designated status.

Policy SS2: development in the Countryside. CPC are currently conducting a separate survey of residents to ascertain their wider aspirations for the village over the next 20-30 years. Its results should be included in the CPC response to this consultation.

The LP allows CPC to identify and propose land for new development, such as housing, employment, leisure and community facilities. There are tools available to determine what sites are best suited for proposed development. SCO understands that CPC will undertake a site suitability assessment for the community-led housing, should that continue to be one of the residents' priorities.

Policy SS4: housing need. The LP sets the minimum rural housing requirement until 2040 for northern Test Valley as 260 homes. In line with section 3.73, no new houses are proposed for Chilbolton Parish; it is for the community to describe its own needs.

Of the 450 houses in the village, too many are now at the larger end, and the number of affordable homes has shrunk in recent years; the balance needs to be restored in any newbuilds. It will be important to sustain a healthy population balance and recruitment of key workers. There is also an increasing need (to be confirmed by the current survey) for downsizing by older residents who wish to stay in the village. The LP should 'provide a range of homes that are fit for purpose and designed to meet the needs and aspirations of different groups within the community including a range of affordable housing and homes that meet the needs of an ageing population.' (sect 2.57)

SCO believes that this section (2.57) should be amended to state 'a younger and ageing population and recruitment of a multi-skilled workforce, including key workers.'

CPC has commissioned an independent survey addressed to all households within Chilbolton to assess the current and future need for different types of housing in the parish. The results will need to be incorporated into the CPC response after the closing date of this consultation.

Based on earlier surveys, a community led housing scheme is being investigated by CPC to deliver up to 20 smaller houses comprising 10 affordable and 10 retirement properties by about 2030. SCO notes that many residents have expressed a wish that future affordable housing be under community control. SCO also believes that a contribution of 20 homes to the northern Test Valley total of 260 homes is proportionate for the size of the village. (Wellow also has 20 homes with a population of over 3 times larger; smaller local parishes have fewer new homes per 1000 population figures than Chilbolton.)

SCO recognises that affordability is different for older and younger residents and is thus difficult to define in a policy. The former may own a house and be capital rich but cash poor, while the latter lack both capital and cash. However, defining affordability simply in terms of income is manifestly unfair to the younger age groups, given the ability of a house owner to convert capital into cash when downsizing. A measure of case-by-case judgement is likely to be required, based on local needs. SCO believes that leaving the decision to the village in the shape of a community land trust seems the fairest approach.

Chapter 4 – Test Valley communities

Policies NA1 and NA2 – Andover town centre. SCO notes the ambitious plans to develop Andover, which remains an important centre for Chilbolton residents. SCO endorses these aims but recognises the task TVBC has in identifying a different image and purpose for Andover if successful regeneration is to occur. Schemes will need to be innovative, affordable and capable of meeting needs and aspirations (yet to be established) for the duration of the plan and beyond. However, with further increases in population of the town generated by the extensive new builds, TVBC must continue to remember the needs of the many surrounding rural villages.

SCO wishes the LP to spell out the level or kind of support that could be expected from TVBC by these communities. (sect 4.28 et seq)

SCO notes the recent Hampshire Hospitals consultation on the future of Basingstoke and Winchester hospitals; however, there was

little or no mention on Andover Community Hospital. SCO believes that better services aimed at prevention and early detection (and some treatment) will be necessary to address the demands from an increasingly ageing population, particularly in the local villages. Basing many of these services in Andover would make eminent sense.

Policy SA17 – Stockbridge local centre. Probably more important to Chilbolton residents than Andover is Stockbridge, where the Coop, surgery, pharmacy and many of the smaller shops continue to play key roles. Development of the healthcare offering would provide important benefits, reducing the need to travel to Andover or beyond to access, for instance, allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, thus reducing the load on local hospitals.

Chapter 5 – theme-based policies

Policy CL1 - Countering climate change. SCO agrees the LP's priorities: minimising greenhouse gas emissions; reducing vulnerability to extreme weather conditions and making efficient use of water; building resilient and flexible infrastructure while delivering biodiversity net gains; and maximising potential for active travel and minimising unnecessary travel. SCO recognises that the village is deficient in all these areas today.

The LP focuses almost exclusively on new developments, whether housing or non-residential buildings; it says little about improving any of the rural communities, or even addressing existing shortfalls. Given the likely modest new building in the village, and the increasing challenges of climate change, the LP must consider how all parties (including TVBC, CPC, Southern Water, Environment Agency, SSE and the public) will at least mitigate the worst of the concerns.

Policies CL2 and CL4: Flood risk, water supply and disposal.

During prolonged winter rains, once the aquifers are full, handling the confluence of high surface water drainage with comparatively low sewage outputs has no easy solution. In contrast, during prolonged dry periods, water supply occasionally fails for short periods.

Despite the current issue of tankering out excessive water at the pumping station by the Abbots Mitre, Chilbolton is 16th priority for flood risk measures within Upper Test Valley. (HCC Capture Management Plan). Only 9 houses are assessed at high risk of flooding. SCO recognises that the likelihood of serious investment in revising the pump and pipework layout is extremely low; an alternative approach is needed.

SCO supports a pan-parish high-level feasibility study to identify realistic options for the future, based on LP sections 5.59-5.69 and the sustainable drainage system policy and guidance to manage rainfall close to where it falls. Innovative schemes will be needed for carbon capture and water quality improvements which would be of benefit to both residents and wild-life habitats.

Policy CL3: Sustainable buildings and energy use. While there are limits on energy use in new homes and non-residential buildings (sects 5.44 - 5.58), SCO observes that there is no parallel policy for updating existing housing stock. It is therefore not clear how planning and environmental policies will together deliver the desired outcome.

SCO believes that the LP should include a statement of, or links to, policy (and funding) for upgrading the energy efficiency of existing homes and non-residential buildings.

SCO supports continued constraints on building's external lighting to maintain the 'dark skies' policy favoured by the community.

Policy CL5: Renewable and low carbon energy. SCO agrees with the LP giving significant weight to community-led renewable and low carbon energy schemes. Previous surveys in the village indicated that the village community strongly prefers solar PV to wind farms.

SCO observes that a small but increasing number of homes outside the Conservation Area now host solar PV and that there are several large solar farms within a few miles of the village. However, the District Network Operator (DNO) currently limits the size of home installations due to the old and fragile nature of the local grid.

SCO would support TVBC or a pan-parish group undertaking a high-level feasibility study of potential low-cost options to improve the exploitation of renewable generation in short, medium and long terms.

Policy BI01: Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

SCO strongly supports the following sections:

There is a legal duty on the council to consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. There are a number of specific legal requirements in relation to considering the implications on certain nature conservation designations, habitats and species. Some of these interact with the planning system and there may additionally be need for separate consents or approvals, such as for certain protected species.' (sect 5.220)

Development that has the potential to harm biodiversity assets....will not be permitted unless the circumstances set out within the policy apply. This is to ensure that any such harm to the assets only occurs in exceptional circumstances and with appropriate mitigation secured.' (sect 5.229)

Furthermore, SCO supports the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain required for all new developments, particularly for larger developments the 'requirement for a management plan detailing management, maintenance and monitoring arrangements to be submitted for approval. The delivery of such management plans will also be secured to ensure the timely implementation of relevant measures and that they continue to function effectively in the future.' (sect 5.256)

SCO welcomes the Local Nature Recovery Strategy being developed by HCC, outlining the contribution to the single national Nature Recovery Network of improved joined-up, wildlife rich places which will benefit people and wildlife.

Policy BI05: Trees and hedgerows. SCO strongly supports the preservation of ancient woodland, ancient semi-natural woodland and ancient or veteran trees. (Sect 5.269) and 'that existing trees and hedges are carefully assessed and considered within all sites, at an early stage in the design process, and/or where tree or hedgerow works are proposed.' (Sect 5.270)

Furthermore, SCO believes that tree planting may form part of a new flood risk management plan to slow down water ingress into the river.

Policy Hou5: Housing to meet our needs.

Based on the previous surveys, the Chilbolton Neighbourhood Development Plan (CNDP) 2016 policy HD1 Policy stated planning was "The mix of any individual development should only be 1-, 2- & 3-bedroom homes including apartments, semi-detached, terraced or bungalows.' The aim was to 're-balance the housing stock in the village, to encourage first time buyers, allowing singles, couples and small families to remain in the parish and community and provide the opportunity for the younger generation to buy or rent their first home.'" This policy was reinforced by TVBC 2029 LP policy Com 7.

SCO vehemently objects to the proposed LP section 5.402 which removes the constraint that any site must comprise a mix of smaller houses. This effectively provides developers with a licence to build large houses and crucially, neuters CNDP Policy HD1. In turn, that would remove the right for local communities to decide their own future, thus contravening section 3.73 of the LP.

SCO has one further concern about the provision of smaller houses. Developers may apply to build close together several, say, 3-bedded homes, to meet the HD1 policy, yet the large floor area and open design easily allows conversion to 4- or even 5-beds without further permission. There are two issues: first, site coverage (SC) (percentage of site covered by building) and second, room or house sizes. SCO suggests that SC should be a maximum around 40%, given that house owners often have a right to extend by 10-15% without permission. On room and house sizes, SCO notes that Government standards set minimum bedroom sizes but not maximum, while several credible sources quote about 20 square metres as average for a double bedroom and 80-120 square metres for a 3-bed house in rural areas.

SCO would encourage the LP to include typical, if not mandatory, figures for SC and room/house sizes as guidelines for planners to protect rural communities in delivering the balanced housing stock which they need to sustain their populations over time. Specifically, proposed SC and building size should be stated on all planning applications.

SCO further proposes that any payments for site specific mitigation (S106) and broader impact on the development of infrastructure (CIL) should be made to parish councils and not TVBC. If that is not possible, then the PCs must have the overriding vote on how the money derived from their parishes is spent.

Policies TR1 and TR2: Active and sustainable travel. SCO acknowledges the significant challenges of sustaining good public transport arrangements in the many villages in the Test Valley. Therefore 'community-based shared mobility schemes may need to be considered where conventional public transport is limited or not available'.

SCO supports investigation of options for the community to deliver a shared mobility scheme to residents in the short, medium and long terms.

SCO supports the creation of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to promote walking and cycling as the primary means of making local journeys, such as commuting to work or travel to school. (Sect 5.492) SCO looks forward to the Test Valley North LCWIP which is due to be published this year.

SCO supports creating opportunities for enhancing the existing highway network by providing quiet roads or alternative traffic free routes to complement the existing Rights of Way network. (Sect 5.493)

SCO agrees that an efficient public transport network is essential to enabling the community to access key services and facilities easily and without always needing a car. It is regrettable, if understandable, that TVBC assert that financial contributions towards supporting bus services will not be supported. (Sect 5.495)

Finally, SCO believes that the village will continue to need private car ownership, perhaps until some form of convenient driverless on-call service is offered, and thus the provision of adequate parking spaces is essential, if necessary above the standards set out in the LP.
