



ALFRED HOMES



## Regulation 16 Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan Representation



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### 1. Statement of Purpose

- 1.1. The Statement is submitted in response to the published Regulation 16 Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan, covering a number of matters but specifically relating to the opportunities as they exist concerning land north of Romsey Road, as showing within Figure 1.
- 1.2. Reference is made to the Regulation 14 Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as the live Planning Application (Ref 25/02588/FULLS) concerning the erection of 38 dwelling houses and a new Pre-School in the Village.



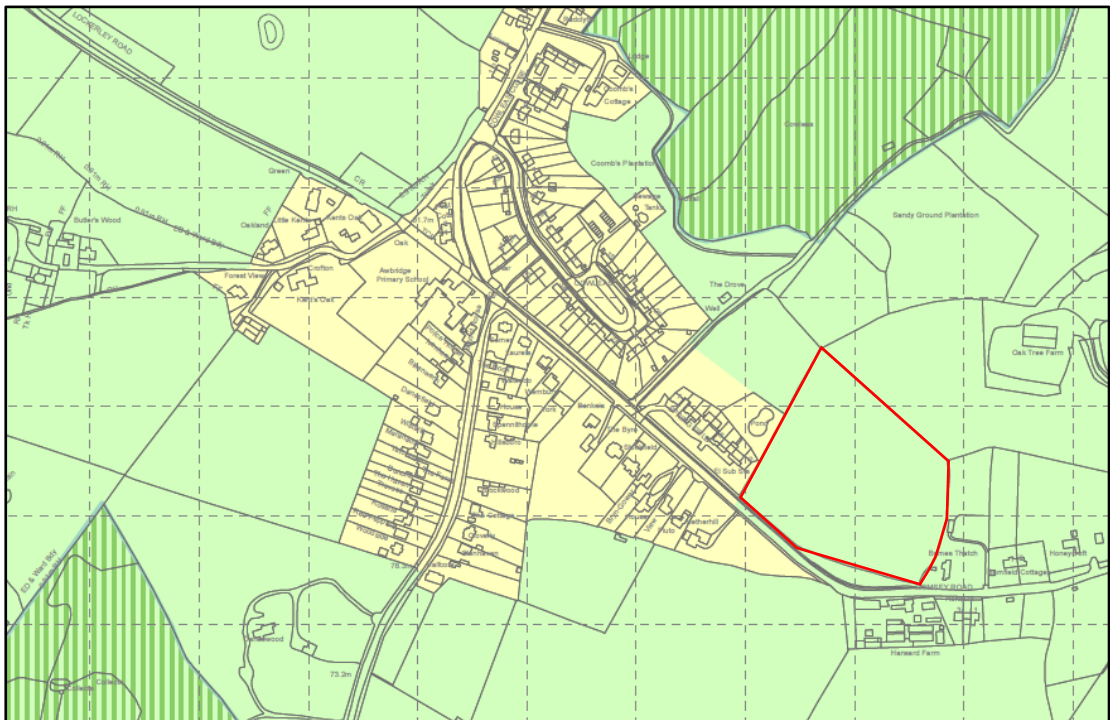
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### 2. Amendments from Regulation 14 Version

2.1 With specific reference to the land north of Romsey Road, as shown within Figure 1, it is noted that a number of material amendments have been made to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan from the Regulation 14 Draft to the Regulation 16 Draft, which are welcomed. These include:

- Removal of a 'key view' traversing the land (Policy A2)
- Removal of the land from 'setting of dispersed settlements' (Policy A6), and
- Acknowledgement of the need for a new Pre-School within the sub-text and Policy A7

**Figure 1: Site Location Plan**



2.2 We welcome these amendments made to the Neighbourhood Plan. The following sections provides observations on the Regulation 16 Draft and amendments considered necessary.



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### 3. Housing Need and Site Allocation

- 3.1. The Regulation 16 Draft maintains its previously held position that the Neighbourhood Plan should not allocate a specific site, with the emerging Test Valley Local Plan requiring a site of a minimum of 10 dwellings to be identified by the Parish within the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2. As per the latest Regulation 18 Test Valley Local Plan Draft, we have seen Tier 3 Settlements across the District be provided housing requirements ranging from 20 dwellings through to 100 dwellings, excluding Weyhill, which is accepted as being an expansion project, and yet, not only does the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan not allocate a site, its quantum of a minimum of 10 dwellings is now disproportionality lower than the other Teir 3 settlements, where allocations are being made either via the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans.
- 3.3. It will be for the Parish and its advisors to justify the conflict with the emerging Local Plan, however, we know from Paragraph 7.1.19 of the Regulation 16 Draft, that the Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges a housing problem locally, concluding that, *'All of these problems do little to support those looking to get onto the property ladder, nor do they encourage young families to reside in the area. This leaves the Parish with an ageing population, resulting in a market where local people have to move outside of the area to purchase more affordable properties elsewhere'* (Para 7.1.19 Regulation 16 Draft).
- 3.4. Having via local consultation identified and documented its housing problem, the Neighbourhood Plan is absent in a positive Policy that seeks to specifically allocate a parcel of land to seek to address the problem and deliver new homes and educational facilities, instead relying on the Neighbourhood Plan being sufficiently permissive to allow development to occur to meet such a need.
- 3.5. Recognising this emerging Local Plan Policy and the need to allocate a residential development, would address the need for new homes to alleviate the real concerns and the ability for people to remain in the village, while also allowing first time buyers and families to access the housing market.
- 3.6. With its housing mix and provision of discount market homes for sale, it is contended that the proposals on land north of Romsey Road would provide the Parish with the necessary allocation to meet its obligations as prescribed within the emerging Local Plan.



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- 3.7. Finally, it is stated within the Regulation 16 Draft that the emerging Local Plan Policy seeking a specific site allocation via the Neighbourhood Plan does not carry 'any weight' (Para 7.1.8), which is manifestly not true in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the weight to be attributed to emerging Development Plan Policies based on the stage of progressing to adoption reached.



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### 4. Community Facilities

- 4.1. It is noted that the Primary School remains listed as 'essential' under Policy A12 '*Community Facilities*' within the Neighbourhood Plan, reflecting its role within the Community. The Parish Council is aware from previous meetings and correspondence of the importance of a Pre-School being located within the Village to the Primary School and its longevity going forward, with rural Schools such as Awbridge Primary School under a constant challenge to maintain sufficient pupil numbers and associated funding.
- 4.2. The closure of a facility such as a rural Primary School has profound effects on the community and travel patterns as those locally are required to find alternative education provision, highlighting why their survival and long term prosperity is often the cause of much campaigning and effort by Parish Council's and communities alike.
- 4.3. At Awbridge we have a Primary School reaching out and seeking assistance, which the Neighbourhood Plan could assist with in supporting a deliverable proposal to construct and deliver the Pre-School, in turn not only supporting an existing essential facility, but delivering new facilities for the community of Awbridge.
- 4.4. As part of the drafting of this representation, regard has been had to the '*Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement*', and the commentary provided responding to those representations lodged at the Regulation 14 Stage.
- 4.5. The following statement from the Parish Council is particularly noteworthy in the context of infrastructure requirements within the Village and expectations in stating that, '*The community has not voted to allocate any specific sites for housing within the Neighbourhood Plan. However, should a larger development proposal come forward through the planning process, the expectation would be that it delivers clear community benefits. These include provision for a pre-school facility, a safe and accessible play area for younger children and a car park to improve safety for families walking to the primary school. This approach reflects the outcomes of the community engagement and ensures that any future growth is proportionate, meets local needs and contributes positively to the Parish*' (Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement).
- 4.6. This Statement would appear to be a pre-cursor to the revised Policy A7, which specifies that as part of a larger community led scheme consideration should be given towards the provision of a Pre-School to feed into the Primary School, which in itself follows the text within Policy 7.1.13, and the documenting of a desire locally for a Pre-School.



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- 4.7. We welcome the recognition by the Parish Council within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan of the need for a Pre-School locally to support Awbridge Primary School, which forms an integral part of the live Planning Application including a car park and opportunities for combined trips with the Primary School.



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### 5. Policy A3 – Local Green Spaces

- 5.1 It is noted that the Neighbourhood Plan continues to identify the Highway verge at Romsey Road as a 'Local Green Space' as listed within Policy A3.
- 5.2 Representation was made during the Regulation 14 consultation, and for completeness is provided once more within this section.
- 5.3 The principle of providing for attractive and accessible green spaces for the community to enjoy is commended and supported, however, this is an isolated parcel of highway verge, of no more than 7m wide at its widest, located adjacent to Romsey Road.
- 5.4 We would question 'is the site demonstrably 'special' to the Local Community' and 'does the site hold a particular local significance'? This includes value relating to:
- Beauty
  - Historic
  - Recreation
  - Tranquillity
  - Wildlife
- 5.5 Taking the first point, there is nothing within the Parish history or Neighbourhood Plan documentation that suggests this small parcel of highway verge is special to the community. Turning to the bullet point criteria, the land cannot be said to be beautiful, historic, hold any recreational value, be tranquil given it forms part of the highway verge and doesn't hold any special designation in respect of ecology or wildlife. At no point therefore would this land meet the tests as set out within the NPPF.
- 5.6 On Page 22 some further commentary on the grass verge and its role locally is provided, which states that '*safety sightlines to dangerous and busy parts of the road and safe refuge for pedestrians, whilst providing wildflower areas in the Spring*'.
- 5.7 In respect of the sightline point, this I can understand in respect of aiding with forward visibility when travelling along Romsey Road in both directions, but this is not a legitimate reason under the guidance of the NPPF upon which to designate as a Local Green Space. The safe refuge point is equally not a cause for identification as a Local Green Space given the presence of an adopted footpath adjacent to the verge. In respect of the wildflowers, the land is managed by Hampshire County Council as part of its ongoing mowing management programme of all of its highway land, and thus the land couldn't be managed for any other purpose.
- 5.8 Given the importance of a Local Green Space designation as afforded by the NPPF and the need to meet the criteria as set out, Parcel LGS6 should be removed from Policy A3.



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- 5.9 As part of the proposals of land to the north of Romsey Road, there are areas of open and green space which will be designed for the benefit of the wider community to use and can act as a focal point within the Village.



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### 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 There are a number of amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan made from the Regulation 14 version that are welcomed as set out within this representation. It is also noted that the Parish Council recognises that there are social and demographic problems within the Village, that a considered residential scheme could support in overcoming.
- 6.2 That said, having identified such problems, it remains of concern that the Neighbourhood Plan remains out of conformity with the emerging Test Valley Borough Council Local Plan, which has delegated responsibility of identifying a residential allocation to the Parish Council via its Neighbourhood Plan process.
- 6.3 With the revised standard methodology, we have witnessed Tier 3 settlements across the Borough receive significant increases in housing to assist in meeting housing need and support rural infrastructure; problems explicitly listed by the Parish as being present within the Parish of Awbridge.
- 6.4 Following its engagement with the Parish Council and local community, Alfred Homes remains committed to advancing its proposals for a range of house types and discount market sale properties, alongside the delivery of a new Pre-School, to assist the Parish in addressing the social and demographic problems it identifies within the emerging Local Plan and to support an essential local facility in the form of the Primary School.
- 6.5 On behalf of the University of Winchester Academy Trust, Awbridge Primary School, Blue Leaf Projects, Macra Ltd and Alfred Homes, we look forward to continuing these discussions.