



MILTON ERNEST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Site Assessment Report

April 2017 (Updated January 2019)



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Site Assessment Report has been undertaken by Troy Planning + Design to inform Milton Ernest Parish Council's emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 This Site Assessment Report should be treated as a 'living document' and is not intended for publication at the present time. The assessments cover considerations relevant to the social, environmental and economic aspects of Sustainable Development. These assessment are separate from the formal process of undertaking a sustainability appraisal ('Strategic Environmental Assessment') that will be required to support the Neighbourhood Plan¹, although the findings may be complementary.
- 1.3 The findings may be subject to review based on the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan and are without prejudice the possibility that the strategic priorities of the Local Plan may change.

Note on December 2018 update

- 1.4 This report was originally prepared for the Parish Council in April 2017 based upon the sites submitted to Bedford Borough Council as part of the 'call for sites' process informing the new Local Plan. During the second Regulation 19 consultation of the Bedford Local Plan ten additional sites were submitted to the Borough Council for consideration. This included one further site in Milton Ernest. This has been assessed in the same way as all other sites in the Parish and the findings presented in a supplementary chapter at the end of the report. Inclusion of this within the report does not change the findings of the April 2017 assessment.

¹ NPPG ID: ID: 41-073-20140306 and ID: 41-072-20140306

2. Local Policy Context

2.1 Bedford Borough Council's (BBC's) statutory development plan must provide a strategy to address employment and housing need up to 2035. The neighbourhood plan when made will form part of the development plan. A neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with this Local Plan. The Site Assessments in this report were carried out in-keeping with BBC's current and emerging development plan and supporting evidence.

2.2 The current development plan for BBC consists of:

- Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008)
- Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2013)
- Local Plan - Saved Policies (2002)

2.3 Supplementary planning documents include:

- Climate Change of Pollution SPD (2008)
- Open Space SPD (2013)
- Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities SPD (2014)
- Planning Obligations SPD (2013)

2.4 The emerging development plan for BBC consists of:

- Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035

2.5 Key evidence base documents include:

- Bedford Borough Council 'Call for Sites' (2014 and 2015)
- Sustainability Appraisal: Bedford Borough Council Local Plan Issues & Options Paper and Bedford Town Centre Discussion Paper (2014)
- Sustainability Appraisal: Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2011)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment – Report of Findings (2015)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2010)
- Employment Land Study (2006)
- Landscape Character Assessment (2014)
- Retail Study (2005)

- Open Space SPD (2013)
- Bedford Waterspace Strategy (2011)

- 2.6 The latest position in the emerging BBC Local Plan 2035 (scheduled for consultation in April – June 2017²) identifies Milton Ernest as a 'Group 2 Village – Rural Service Centre' with a proposed allocation of 25 to 50 dwellings to support the Borough's preferred spatial strategy and meet a requirement to provide more limited growth to support local services. Further evidence to be published alongside the consultation will provide further justification for the development strategy and a Site Selection Methodology to demonstrate the basis for assessing the sites considered most suitable for development.
- 2.7 The imminent consultation does not identify a preferred Site Allocation for Milton Ernest. The position in the Parish is summarised as follows:

"Milton Ernest is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan that will allocate development sites. If progressed, the allocation will be decided by the Parish Council and could include other sites to those listed above if justified in the Neighbourhood Plan."

- 2.8 Parish Councils will be asked to consider their position as part of the forthcoming consultation. Undertaking site assessments prior to this consultation provides the Steering Group with complementary evidence to support this engagement and to be considered alongside BBC's methodology.
- 2.9 As part of the preparation of the BBC Local Plan 2035, the Council undertook 'Call for Sites' exercises in 2014 and 2015. The content of these submissions has been published and is available to review online³. An assessment of the site submissions is required to enable the most appropriate sites to be selected to meet future employment and housing requirements. At this time, the Parish Council has undertaken no further 'Call for Sites' activity locally, following a Steering Group decision taking account of the submissions already made. Given the extensive engagement on site identification undertaken by Bedford Borough Council in recent years this decision would appear to be appropriate in the circumstances.

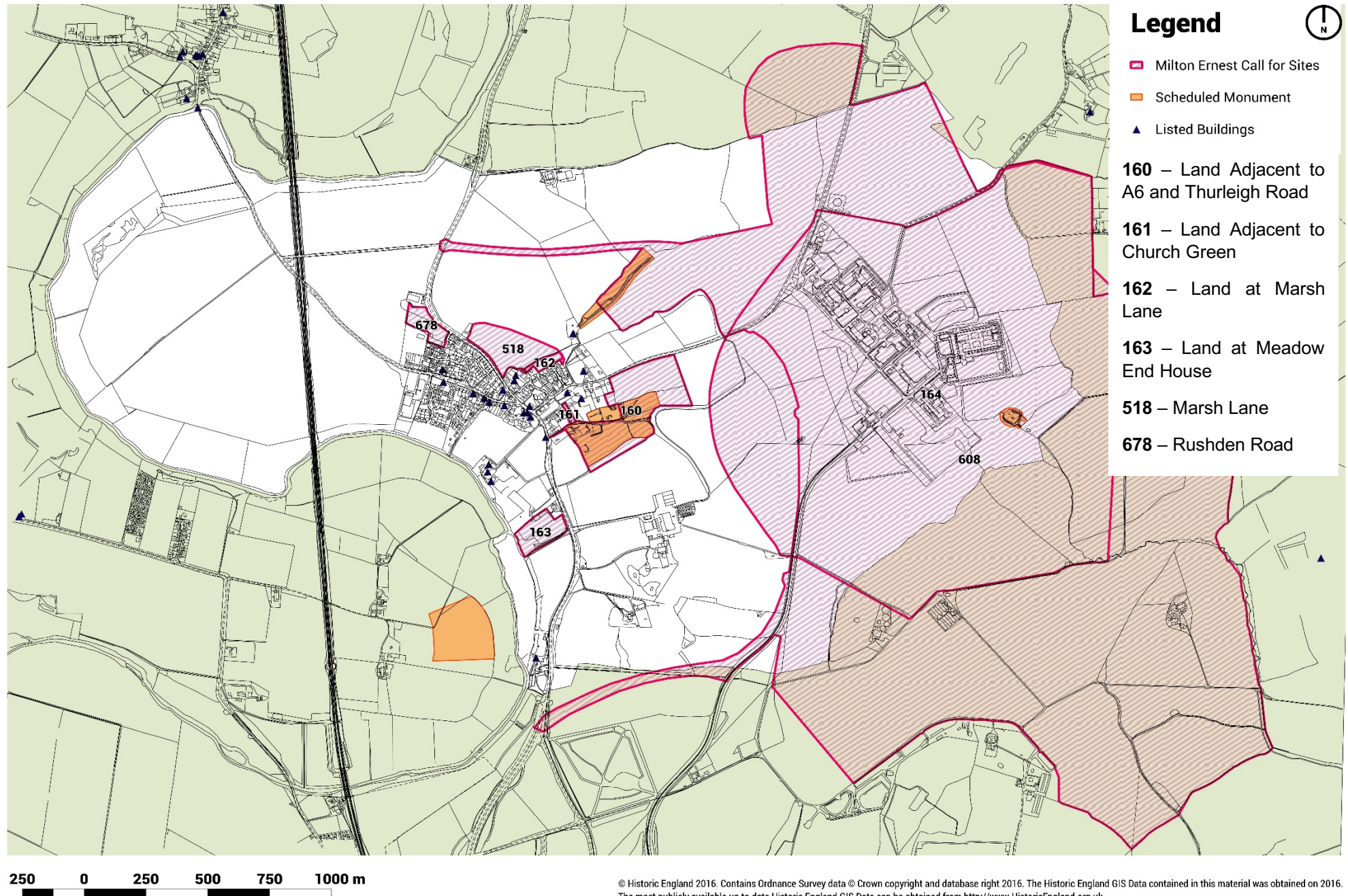
² The summary in this Report is based on Draft Local Plan Consultation Documents published for the meeting of the Council's Executive on 22 February 2017.

³ <http://milton-ernest.co.uk/2016/02/bedford-borough-council-2032-local-plan-call-for-sites-2015/>

- 2.10 This report provides an initial assessment (without mitigation) of the site submissions located within the Milton Ernest Parish.⁴ These are set out in **Map 1**. The assessment findings will form part of the evidence base which will steer the development of policies in the Milton Ernest Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.11 It is envisaged that these assessments will be reviewed against the evidence base published alongside the forthcoming consultation on the emerging Local Plan. This may affect findings in terms of the infrastructure or viability requirements to ensure a site is deliverable or developable and may also highlight other material considerations for development such as updated information on the built, historic or natural environment which should be considered.

⁴ The strategic site 608 – Twinwoods New Settlement was not assessed as this is a strategic site. This falls within the scope of the BBC's Local Plan 2035.

Map 1. Milton Ernest Call for Sites



3. The Assessment Methodology

3.1 DCLG's online planning practice guidance⁵ provides advice on the assessment criteria that needs to be considered when analysing a future supply for housing and economic development. This formed the overarching structure of the site assessment. Key considerations are summarised below.

- *Availability:* Owner's support to take forward the site for housing and/or employment use.
- *Achievability:* The capacity and configuration of the site. Major development constraints i.e. highways, flooding that would prohibit the site from being developed.
- *Suitability:* The site relationship with current and emerging development plan policy, environmental/amenity constraints.

3.2 National Planning Practice Guidance for Neighbourhood Planning provides further direction for those groups considering site allocations as part of their approach. This reinforces the nationally available guidance for site assessments⁶. Neighbourhood Plans may look to allocate sites to meet requirements identified in the Local Plan and this may include allocating alternative or additional sites to those contained in the Local Plan. It is important to demonstrate that the sites identified are appropriate and would not constrain the delivery of other strategic sites identified in the Local Plan⁷.

3.3 When preparing site assessments and considering site allocations, qualifying bodies and local authorities should work together constructively, avoid duplicating work and share relevant evidence⁸. Engagement with the local authority (and other infrastructure providers) can also be an important part of establishing the requirements for development and deliverability and viability of sites⁹.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>. Accessed April 2017.

⁶ Paragraph Reference ID: 41-042-20140306

⁷ Paragraph Reference ID: 41-044-20160519

⁸ Paragraph Reference ID: 41-043-20140306

⁹ Paragraph Reference ID: 41-045-20140306

- 3.4 At the time of writing further consultation on the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 is imminent and therefore it will be necessary to revisit these aspects of guidance and potentially review site assessments based on engagement with and evidence published by BBC.
- 3.5 A proforma was developed which set out more detailed factors to be considered. This was informed by BBC's sustainability appraisal objectives.¹⁰
- *(1) Ensure resilience to reduce the effects of climate change through effective adaption and mitigation.*
 - *(2) Promote sustainable lifestyles, use resources efficiently, maximize recycling and re-use.*
 - *(3) Conserve and enhance the built and historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.*
 - *(4) Create, conserve, protect and enhance the borough's natural features, distinctive local environments, habitats and species.*
 - *(5) Promote strong, sustained and balanced economic growth and job creation across a range of sectors.*
 - *(6) Improve the skills of the labour force, matching skill outcome with market needs.*
 - *(7) Create a distinctive, attractive and multi-functional town centre.*
 - *(8) Meet the needs of a changing population.*
 - *(9) Reduce levels of deprivation, inequalities and exclusion.*
 - *(10) Promote community involvement in place shaping, promote healthy and safe communities.*
 - *(11) Promote a strong local identity and sense of place.*
 - *(12) Minimise growth in car usage, reduce the need to travel and promote the shift to more sustainable modes of transport.*
- 3.6 The proforma used a Red, Amber, Green ('RAG') system to summarise the assessment findings (see Figure 2). Assigning 'RAG' classification for each element of the proforma for every site was undertaken against the Site Assessment Criteria developed to ensure consistency in the methodology. These Criteria are included in Appendix 1. The analysis of access to facilities such as shops, bus stops and schools applied the Institute of Highways and Transportation standards.

¹⁰ Sustainability Appraisal: Bedford Borough Council Local Plan Issues & Options Paper and Bedford Town Centre Discussion Paper (2014).

Figure 1. Assessment Threshold Standards			
	Facilities e.g. shops, bus stop	Community/School	Other
Desirable	200m	500m	400 m
Acceptable	400m	1000m	800m
Preferred maximum	800m	2000m	1200m

Source: Institute of Highways and Transportation

Figure 2. Assessment Scoring

Green	Indicates a positive outcome against the assessment criteria which is unlikely to present a barrier to development suitability or achievability
Amber	Assessment against the criteria indicates some mitigation may be required, further evidence may be needed or that current information means outcomes may be uncertain. A neutral indication of development suitability
Red	Assessment against the criteria indicates a significant constraint on development or that substantial mitigation may be required. The assessment may highlight wider issues for plan-making and is a negative indication of suitability, availability or achievability.

- 3.7 The assessments provide an initial overview on the most suitable locations for future development. Any development of a site would need to demonstrate how any adverse effects would be mitigated in the proposal and its supporting evidence. Additionally, BBC would seek planning contributions to address any infrastructure requirements arising from that development.
- 3.8 Potential mitigation measures are not factored into this assessment and the details of each site are considered as far as possible on an 'as submitted' basis. However, the following assumptions have been made to convert gross site area to a net developable area for the purposes of calculating site capacity:

- Gross Site Area < 0.5ha = 100% of area developable
- Gross Site Area 0.5ha - 2.5 ha = 70% of area developable
- Gross Site Area > 2.5 ha = 50% of area developable

- 3.9 A density of 30 dwellings per developable hectare is applied to estimate residential development capacity. Because of this aspect of the methodology the assessments do consider the extent to which the sites may be able to accommodate different levels of development within the gross site area, which may in-turn have some effect in assessing other criteria e.g. the overall landscape impact.
- 3.10 Troy Planning + Design has prepared a (Draft) Environmental Character Assessment on behalf of Milton Ernest Parish Council. This forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and has been used to inform the site assessments against criteria including site configuration, heritage issues, the important landmarks and views and the in considering landscape setting of Milton Ernest.

4. Site Assessment Summaries

160 – Land adjacent to A6 and Thurleigh Road			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R , Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	160 – Land adjacent to A6 and Thurleigh Road	
	Size of Site	10.62 Hectares	
	Availability of site	Site available, and promoted in the call to sites. The site is in single ownership.	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	159 dwellings at 30dph with an assumed 50% developable area. Presence of Scheduled Monument would further reduce the developable area, reducing this assumed figure. However, in principle the scale of the site may materially change the character and identity of the village.	Red
	Site configuration	Undeveloped land with undulating topography and relatively open field pattern and limited boundary definition. Site is outside of the settlement boundary.	Red
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield	Red
	Existing use	Agriculture	Green
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	PROW runs through the site from north to south direction across the Scheduled Ancient Monument although due to the extent of the site this may be	Amber

		accommodated within non-developable areas of the site.	
	Footways	Existing links along Thurleigh Road but these cease at the village gates / 30mph speed limit boundary running east from the village. There is no public footway adjacent the north side of the A6 fronting the site	Amber
	Linkages	Adjacent to village with reasonable prospect for good connections.	Green
	Highways access	Likely to be subject to detailed investigation but potentially achievable from either Thurleigh Road or Bedford Road (A6). Options are likely to explore the possibility of access close to and between existing properties fronting the A6 within the main village in the first instance. It is possible that access would be taken some distance from existing built development in the village, potentially outside the 30mph speed restriction and requiring changes to boundary treatments and tree coverage along the A6.	Amber
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Access could potentially be provided avoiding A6 but this is unlikely given the presence of the Scheduled Monument and rising topography. Any new junction could increase traffic movements close to the village centre	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	Potential that development would harm the setting of the Grade I Listed Church as well as other Listed Building nearby to the north and west of the site of the site.	Amber
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	Development could affect the historic core of Milton Ernest and disrupt the character of the historic core of the village. The Environmental Character Assessment and Milton Ernst Heritage Trail identifies a number of non-designated assets in this area which are an important part of local character.	Red
	Scheduled Monument	Over 50% of site comprises a Scheduled Monument.	Red

Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	None.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	None.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	None.	Green
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	Presence of three protected trees along identified access to Bedford Road associated with Chestnut Cottage, The Maltings 5 Bedford Road and 3a Bedford Road (MK44 1RJ).	Red
	Important hedgerow	Some hedgerows cross the site.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	No.	Green
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Development of the site would detract from the nucleated settlement pattern of Milton Ernest, extending development to the north-east beyond the historic core of the village.	Red
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	Site could affect the setting of the church and other listed buildings.	Red
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	The site is not enclosed. Any land which is not designated as a Schedule Monument is set away from the village centre to the north east. Development in this location would detract from the nucleated development pattern of the village. The Milton Ernest Environmental Character Assessment identifies the adjacent area within the existing settlement as forming part of the 'Historic Core' of Milton Ernest which is not associated with previous phases of large scale development and is marked by a lower density and more dispersed pattern of land uses and residential development.	Red
	Green infrastructure	Some provision and improvement to public access likely but would need to be sensitive to the Scheduled Ancient Monument.	Amber

Community infrastructure	Community facilities	The site could potentially accommodate retail, community facilities and employment space given its size. The exact format may be dependent on other constraints, the overall developable area and arrangements for site access and road frontage	Green
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Some potential.	Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	Some potential for small scale on-site energy generation but limited potential to serve off-site local demand.	Amber
Overall	Overall assessment	Given the likely landscape impacts, harm to the setting of the Scheduled Monument and the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings it is considered that the site is not a suitable site for development.	Red

161 – Land adjacent to Church Green			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R, Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	161 – Land adjacent to Church Green	
	Size of Site	0.16 ha	
	Availability of site	Available and in single ownership.	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	4/5 at 30dph assuming 100% of site is developable.	Red
	Site configuration	Narrow site running southward from Church Green, partially within settlement boundary.	Green
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield	Red
	Existing use	Equestrian	Green
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	None.	Green
	Footways	Existing footways to Church Green.	Green
	Linkages	Village core accessed by Church Green.	Green
	Highways access	From Church Green. Some improvements potentially required	Amber
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Limited impact given scale of site. Access reliant on roads through existing village.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	To the north. The relationship with the Grade I Listed Church may be significant but harm may be avoided by sensitive design and due to the	Amber

		limited scale of development likely to be achieved.	
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	The open undeveloped fields to the rear characterise the immediate character of the settlement and the relationship Milton Ernest has with the Scheduled Monument.	Amber
	Scheduled Monument	To southern boundary of site.	Amber
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	No.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	None.	Green
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	None found.	Green
	Important hedgerow	Established hedgerow present to two boundaries.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	No.	Green
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Half of site within settlement boundary and adjoined/ enclosed by built area. Land to southern part of site reflects open surrounding rural setting.	Amber
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	Development would need to be sensitive to the setting of the Church and Scheduled Monument.	Amber
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	Development of the entire site could harm the immediate character as part of the historic core however these are matters that may be addressed by sensitive design and the limited scale of overall development.	Amber
	Green infrastructure	Unlikely given the size of the site.	Red

Community infrastructure	Community facilities	Unlikely due to the size of the site.	Red
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Unlikely given the size of the site.	Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	Some potential for small scale on-site energy generation but limited potential to serve off-site local demand.	Amber
Overall	Overall assessment	The site could help deliver additional housing in a sensitive manner however development of the site outside of the existing settlement boundary would have a harmful impact upon the immediate landscape character and the setting of the adjacent Scheduled Monument. This constraint could further reduce the number of likely new home on the site and the opportunities to contribute to overall housing requirements.	Amber

162 – Land at Marsh Lane			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R , Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	162 – Land at Marsh Lane	
	Size of Site	0.52ha	
	Availability of site	Available, not presently being marketed. Call for sites promotes employment use or live work development.	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	11 dwellings at 30dph assuming a developable area of 70%.	Amber
	Site configuration	Undeveloped edge of settlement site. Village boundary to southern and western edge, adjacent to residential properties. Scrub land with informal pedestrian route running east to west through site. Prevailing characteristics of urban fringe and paddock uses rather than active agricultural use.	Green
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield, undeveloped.	Red
	Existing use	Site is undeveloped and appears to be semi-grazed scrubland.	Green
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	None. An informal path used by the wider public runs through the site.	Green
	Footways	Additional development could potentially connect the site to Marsh Lane and to Rushden Road and improve pedestrian access to the A6.	Amber
	Linkages	Marsh Lane, connects site to village. Other informal pedestrian routes could potentially be formalised.	Green
	Highways access	Access to the site via Marsh Lane. Immediate connection may have to cross land in separate ownership. Access via Rushden Road (A6) would require additional development in association with adjacent land (Call for Sites Ref 518)	Red

	Impact of traffic on village centre	Connection to existing road network, through the village centre. Traffic generated by the site may increase movements on the existing urban road network via Marsh Lane and Thurleigh Road to the village centre.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	None within or immediately adjacent to the site. The wider setting of the Grade I Listed Church may require further investigation and there are further Listed Buildings to the south and west of the site.	Green/Amber
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	Development would be relatively close to the historic core of Milton Ernest but separated by more recent limited development. The Environmental Character Assessment and Milton Ernst Heritage Trail identifies a number of non-designated assets in this area which are an important part of local character.	Green/Amber
	Scheduled Monument	No.	Green
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	No.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	No.	Green
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	None identified.	Green
	Important hedgerow	A hedge borders the adjoining field to the north although this hedge is not well established. A few young trees are present, growing adjacent or from within the hedge.	Green
Water	Flood zone	The site is located outside of a flood zone. The presence of an open water ditch highlights that surface water from the adjoining field may run down adjacent to the boundary with the site. Potential surface water management required.	Amber
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Undeveloped field helps give character to immediate village, although this contribution is limited.	Amber
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	Sensitive development would have little impact but may need to have	Amber

		regard to views out of the site to the countryside.	
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	Development of the site is contiguous with the existing settlement boundary and adjoins more modern development. The adjoining hedge provides a visual break between the settlement and adjoining arable field. Views into the site and on the approaches are likely to be seen in the context of existing development of various types and ages.	Amber
	Green infrastructure	The site is already accessible to the public and is of limited scale. This may restrict the scope for GI within development parameters. The site could provide some limited GI improvements by promoting access, enriching the hedgerow with potential to incorporate a linear planted pedestrian route. and the scale.	Amber
Community infrastructure	Community facilities	Given the size of the site it is unlikely that the site could accommodate community facilities.	Red
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Provision might be difficult to provide with potential viability issues. Such facilities might be located elsewhere. The submission includes details for potentially accommodating live/work premises within the development although the nature and management of such provision is uncertain.	Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	Some potential for small scale on-site energy generation but limited potential to serve off-site local demand.	Amber
Overall	Overall assessment	The site could accommodate a well-connected development which increases the settlement boundary of the village without having a significant landscape impact, or impact upon any heritage assets. Development would be required to sensitive and proportionate to housing need. Vehicular access may be reliant on land outside of the ownership of the landowner.	Green/Amber

163 - Land at Meadow End House			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R , Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	163 - Land at Meadow End House	
	Size of Site	2.2ha	
	Availability of site	Available and single ownership.	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	46 dwellings assuming that 70% of the site is developable at a density of 30dph.	Amber
	Site configuration	Undeveloped site bordered by deciduous and broad leafed woodland, providing principally amenity space for the associated property Prevailing characteristics of urban fringe and paddock uses rather than active agricultural use.	Red
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield	Red
	Existing use	Garden land/ private amenity land	Amber
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	>400m <800m	Amber
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	>400m <800	Amber
	Public rights of way (PROW)	None.	Green
	Footways	Existing pedestrian/ cycle route along A6 to Milton Ernest.	Green
	Linkages	None other than pedestrian/cycle route along the A6.	Amber
	Highways access	Bedford Road. The site is beyond the village 30mph speed limit which may have implications for junction	Amber

		arrangements (visibility splays and line of sight).	
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Traffic heading south from the site would avoid the village centre. All other traffic would be reliant on roads which run through the village.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	None within or immediately adjacent to the site. The grounds of Milton Ernest Hall are located to the north.	Green/Amber
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	None identified.	Green
	Scheduled Monument	None.	Green
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	No	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	Adjacent to good quality semi-improved grassland (Priority habitat).	Amber
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	The northern boundary of the site adjoins a TPO zone.	Green
	Important hedgerow	The site is bound by many mature trees and hedges.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	Part of site in Flood Zone 3 (Fluvial Flooding) but may be incorporated within undeveloped land to the rear of the site.	Red/Amber
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Undeveloped grassed site with enclosed by trees and woodland. The site is adjacent to the River Ouse.	Red
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	The development of the site would be unlikely to have an immediate impact upon any landmarks but would restrict views across the River Ouse Valley.	Amber
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	Development would represent a departure from the settlement pattern, introducing dispersed	Red

		development set away from any existing settlement or areas of residential character.	
	Green infrastructure	Some on site potential but limited public connections to the wider network.	Green/Amber
Community infrastructure	Community facilities	Unlikely given the size of the site and its disconnected position away from the village and less accessible to existing facilities.	Amber / Red
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Potential to accommodate these uses, but any business would be reliant on passing trade generated by those using the A6 rather than the residents of the site or Milton Ernest and satisfying highways requirements associated with different land uses.	Green/Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	On-site generation could be accommodated. Some potential to generate electricity for off-site use.	Green
Overall	Overall assessment	Development of this site would introduce development away from Milton Ernest or any other settlement, introducing dispersed development which would harm the undeveloped nature of the landscape character in this location. Any development, despite the cycle and pedestrian links which run along the A6, would likely be car orientated given the detached broadly unconnected position of the site.	Red

518 - Marsh Lane			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R , Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	518 - Rushden Road/ Marsh Lane	
	Size of Site	4.99ha	
	Availability of site	Available, in single ownership and promoted within the recent Call for Sites.	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	75 dwellings assuming that 50% of the site is developable at a density of 30dph. It is anticipated that a significantly smaller developable area would be identified to accord with the suggested level of development in the emerging Local Plan.	Amber
	Site configuration	Undeveloped agricultural land forming part of a larger arable field. The site adjoins Marsh Lane terminating adjacent to No.20 Rushden Road. The gradient of the land rises north eastward through the site. There is very little subdivision within the site. Due to the relief and topography of the site there is little obvious indication of where a defensible boundary could be identified as part of seeking a smaller developable area.	Red
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield	Red
	Existing use	Undeveloped agricultural land	Green
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green

	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	No formal PROW but informal route to south of the site.	Green
	Footways	Footways present along Rushden Road and Marsh Lane.	Green
	Linkages	Linkages to existing village from Marsh Lane and informal pedestrian links to Rushden Road and Thurleigh Road.	Amber
	Highways access	Possibility of exploring from Marsh Lane but may require access across land within different ownerships and subject to Highways Assessment. Potential to create access from Rushden Road (A6) at potentially multiple points along the site frontage.	Green/Amber
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Access to A6 (Rushden Road) could be created but this would increase traffic through the village centre.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	None.	Green
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	No immediate heritage assets, although impacts to nearby Listed Buildings to the south and east may require sensitive design.	Green
	Scheduled Monument	None	Green
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	None.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	No.	Green
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	Tree preservation Order for x6 Ash trees along boundary with 20 Rushden Road may impact upon layout, access or developable area to the western boundary of the site.	Amber

	Important hedgerow	A well-kept mature hedgerow runs along the western boundary of the site parallel to Rushden Road. This hedgerow defines the view from Rushden Road, reinforcing the rural character of the field.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	Site is not within a flood risk zone. Surface water drainage ditch to southern edge of site. Given the size of the site any development would have to mitigate against any wider flooding within the immediate catchment area, given the nearby river and associated floodplain.	Green
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Undeveloped land with gradient rising south to north. The site is not enclosed and has an undeveloped agricultural appearance, reinforcing the rural character beyond the settlement of Milton Ernest. Given the increase in gradient and the open nature of the field development of the site would likely harm the landscape character and the setting of the village within its landscape context.	Red
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	The setting of All Saints Church could be affected by development of the site.	Amber
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	The size of the site would and its prominent position would harm the landscape character of Milton Ernest.	Red
	Green infrastructure	The site could accommodate GI and offer an enhancement to biodiversity beyond the farmed arable field as well as having some potential to improve public access.	Green
Community infrastructure	Community facilities	The site could accommodate community facilities, in a manner that could connect well with the existing settlement. This will be dependent on the overall scale of development.	Green
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	The site could potentially accommodate retail, facilities and employment space given its size and position to the village and A6.	Green

Energy	On-site community energy	The site could accommodate on-site generation, helping to serve the needs of the site and potentially local demand.	Green
Overall	Overall assessment	The site is considered as being unsuitable for development given its likely landscape impact and the disproportionate size of the site in relation to Milton Ernest. Development of this site would significantly alter and extend the settlement area of Milton Ernest.	Amber

678 - Rushden Road			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R , Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	678 - Rushden Road	
	Size of Site	1.39ha	
	Availability of site	Available, site in single ownership. Proportion of site in operation as an established business.	Amber
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	29 houses assuming that 70% of the site is developable at a density of 30dph.	Amber
	Site configuration	Partially developed site with employment B Class use to south-east corner. North-west corner comprises undeveloped scrub land with evidence of animal grazing.	Green
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Part greenfield and part brownfield.	Amber
	Existing use	B Class Employment use and undeveloped land most which is now subject to an extant planning consent. Recent expansion of hard-standing suggests location as viable employment space, which is also important for economic sustainability in a balanced settlement. Part of northern half of site given approval in June 2014 for change of use to open storage (B8 Use Class) with hardstanding - to provide open car parking for the adjacent garage. Reference: 14/00515/FUL 16/03655/FUL - Application to extend existing business into northern half of site. Delegated Approval 14 February 2017	Red

Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	None.	Green
	Footways	No footway/ pavements immediately connect the site with pedestrian access to the public highway, which can be reached across the grass verge fronting the site.	Amber
	Linkages	Limited access to Milton Ernest along Rushden Road (A6) but opportunity to connect with adjacent park and provide a new footpath along Rushden Road.	Amber
	Highways access	Existing Rushden Road access. The site is within a 30mph zone. No issues raised when determining recent application proposals under 16/03655/FUL	Green
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Traffic would be routed through the village centre.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	None.	Green
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	None.	Green
	Scheduled Monument	None	Green
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	No.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	No.	Green
	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green

	Tree Preservation Area	x4 Protected trees to demise of western boundary fence of existing commercial uses (to the middle of the site. The relevant TPO protects x2 Ash and x2 Oak trees. Developable area may be affected as part of incorporating the constraint within screening or open space	Red/ Amber
	Important hedgerow	Little hedgerow is present where the TPO exists. The hedgerow which adjoins Rushden Road to the eastern boundary has been poorly maintained but is native and an important feature.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	No.	Green
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Edge of settlement, partially developed. Development of the north of the site would see a degree of departure from the nucleated settlement character of Milton Ernest.	Amber
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	Development of site unlikely to have any harmful impacts.	Green
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	The development of the entire site would alter the settlement boundary, representing a northern built area at odds with the nucleated development pattern of the village. Half the site is however previously developed and development of this area would have less of an impact.	Green/Amber
	Green infrastructure	Adjacent to playing field to southern boundary. The development could improve access to this area, providing a pedestrian link connection through the site.	Green
Community infrastructure	Community facilities	Some potential to provide new facilities, in particular facilities which might complement or make use of the adjacent park.	Amber

Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Existing use provides employment use. The retention of employment space could be explored as part of a mixed-use development but may impact upon the viability of existing uses.	Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	On-site energy generation possible which could serve wider community demand.	Amber
Overall	Overall assessment	The presence of the existing business may affect deliverability of the site in the short term. Development of the northern part of the site could lead to negative landscape impacts. Part of the site is however within the existing built settlement area and comprises previously developed land. The opportunity to improve pedestrian access to the park or provide an enhancement to this park presents an opportunity.	Green/ Amber

5. Assessment Overview

5.1 Figure 3 below sets out the traffic light site assessment summary.

Figure 3. Site Assessment Overview						
Site	160 Land adjacent to A6 and Thurleigh Road	161 Land adjacent to Church Green	162 Land at Marsh Lane	163 Land at Meadow End House	518 Rushden Road/ Marsh Lane	678 Rushden Road
Availability of site	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber
Site capacity	Red	Red	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Site configuration	Red	Green	Green	Red	Amber	Green
Brownfield/greenfield	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Amber
Existing use	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Red
Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green
Access to primary school*	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Access to public transport*	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green

Public rights of way (PROW)	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Footways	Amber	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Amber
Linkages	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber
Highways access	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Green/Amber	Green
Impact of traffic on village centre	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Listed building	Amber	Amber	Green/Amber	Green/Amber	Green	Green
Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	Red	Amber	Green/Amber	Green	Green	Green
Scheduled Monument	Red	Amber.	Green	Green	Green	Green
Site of Special Scientific interest	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Site of Nature Conservation Importance	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green
Ancient Woodland	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Tree Preservation Area	Red	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Red/ Amber

Important hedgerow	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber
Flood zone	Green	Green	Amber	Red/Amber	Green	Green
Landscape character	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Amber
Safeguarding important views and landmarks	Red	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green
Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Green/Amber
Green infrastructure	Amber	Red	Amber	Green/Amber	Green	Green
Community facilities	Green	Red	Red	Amber / Red	Green	Amber
Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green/Amber	Green	Amber
On-site community energy	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	Amber
Overall assessment	Red	Amber	Green/Amber	Red	Amber	Green/ Amber

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 BBC's emerging evidence sets out the indicative requirement to allocate up to around 50 new dwellings in the Milton Ernest Parish up to 2035 as part of the preferred spatial strategy and strategic priorities of the Local Plan. This is an initial assessment to provide a steer on those sites which, based on the current evidence, are the most sustainable options to consider in more depth. It does not factor in mitigation, full evidence on infrastructure, viability or other development requirements or any engagement with landowners or developers e.g. on potential community benefits.
- 6.2 The least suitable sites are as follows:
- *160 – Land Adjacent to A6 and Thurleigh Road (Red)*. Potential negative impacts identified: site capacity, configuration, current use, heritage assets, TPO's, landscape character, views & landmarks and landscape setting.
 - *163 – Land at Meadow End House (Red)*. Potential negative impacts identified: configuration, current use, landscape character and landscape setting.
- 6.3 The following site options indicate scope for further consideration:
- *161 – Land Adjacent to Church Green (Amber)*. Potential negative impacts identified: site capacity, current use, green infrastructure, community facilities.
 - *162 – Land at Marsh Lane (Green/Amber)*. Potential negative impacts identified: on current use, highways access (particularly whether the sites could be developed except in combination with other areas) and community facilities.
 - *518 – Marsh Lane (Amber)* Some potential negative impacts identified: the current use, landscape character, and landscape setting.
 - *678 – Rushden Road (Green/Amber)*. Potential negative impacts identified: existing use and to a lesser extent the landscape setting of Milton Ernest.
- 6.4 It is recommended that sites with an overall assessment of 'Green/Amber' or 'Amber' should be investigated in more detail through the Neighbourhood Plan policy option process.

7. Additional site assessment

- 7.1 This section of the report presents an assessment of the additional site submitted to Bedford Borough Council through the second Regulation 19 consultation of the Local Plan. Advice from the Borough Council is that sites submitted in neighbourhood plan areas should be considered by parishes as part of the preparatory work on the neighbourhood plan.
- 7.2 One additional site was submitted within Milton Ernest for consideration. This is:
- Site name: Land South of Parkside, Milton Ernest
Site number: 907 (Bedford Borough Council Site Reference)
Proposed use: 4.2ha Residential up to 65 dwellings
- 7.3 The location plan provided by the site promoters is shown below at Figure 4. The table then following this presents the summary site assessment.

Figure 4. Location Plan, Land South of Parkside



Source: Site Plan submitted by promoter and available via Bedford Borough Council website

907 – Land South of Parkside			
Site selection criteria		Notes	Classification (Red R, Amber A or Green G)
Site availability	Name of site	907 – Land South of Parkside	
	Size of Site	4.2ha	
	Availability of site	Available, site in single ownership and promoted through Regulation 19 consultation of Local Plan	Green
Rural identity and needs	Site capacity	88 houses assuming 70% of the site is developable at a density of 30dph. Site submission assumes up to 65 houses at a lower density.	Green
	Site configuration	Undeveloped site adjacent to the settlement boundary. River Lane is to the west of the site and the River Great Ouse to the south. To the east / south east is Milton Ernest Hall (Care Home) and access to this.	Green
Land use	Brownfield/greenfield	Greenfield	Red
	Existing use	Undeveloped site, recorded as 'open countryside' on site submission	Amber
Transportation	Access to village centre services (post office, shop, village green)*	<400m	Green
	Access to primary school*	<500m	Green
	Access to public transport*	<400m	Green
	Public rights of way (PROW)	No public rights of way through site, though site is adjacent to River Lane (to the west).	Amber

	Footways	No footway/ pavements immediately connect the site with pedestrian access to the public highway.	Red
	Linkages	Linkages to existing village from River Lane and informal pedestrian links to Radwell Road and Bedford Road.	Amber
	Highways access	Likely to be subject to a further detailed investigation with potential access from either Parkside or River Lane. Options are likely to explore access between existing properties along Parkside or creating a new access onto River Lane. However, creating a new access onto River Lane may be problematic due to it being a narrow single track lane.	Red
	Impact of traffic on village centre	Traffic generated by the site may increase movements on the existing urban road network via Radwell Rd to the village centre.	Amber
Heritage assets	Listed building	None within the site but three listed buildings adjacent to the site to the south (Grade II Listed Buildings associated with Milton Ernest Hall; House, Formerly Stable Block and Dovecote and Grade I Listed Building Milton Ernest Hall). The relationship with these heritage assets may be significant but harm may be avoided by sensitive design.	Amber
	Features Potentially Identified as Local Heritage Assets but not Formally Designated	None identified.	Green
	Scheduled Monument	None.	Green
Natural Environment	Site of Special Scientific interest	No.	Green
	Site of Nature Conservation Importance	No.	Green
	Local Wildlife Site/Local Nature Reserve	No.	Green

	Ancient Woodland	None.	Green
	Tree Preservation Area	None on site.	Green
	Important hedgerow	Established hedgerow present to two boundaries.	Amber
Water	Flood zone	The southern part of the site falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3. Given the size of the site any development would have to mitigate against any flooding within the immediate catchment area, given the river running along the edge of the site and its associated floodplain. The submission details that development will not be located in flood zones 2 and 3.	Amber
Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape character	Undeveloped land adjacent to the settlement boundary. The site has an undeveloped agricultural appearance which reinforces the rural character of Milton Ernest. The site is relatively flat and is not detached from the existing settlement.	Green
	Safeguarding important views and landmarks	The setting of Milton Ernest Hall could be affected by development of the site.	Amber
	Protecting the landscape setting of Milton Ernest	The development of the entire site would alter the settlement boundary and the size of the site could potentially harm the landscape character of the Milton Ernest.	Amber
	Green infrastructure	Some on site potential but limited public connections to the wider network. Scope to provide GI on site by improving access and pedestrian routes.	Green/Amber

Community infrastructure	Community facilities	Potential to accommodate new facilities on site due to its size.	Amber
Business and commercial	Retail/local facilities and employment premises	Scope to provide these uses, but site will need to become better connected for locals and passing trade.	Amber
Energy	On-site community energy	The site could accommodate on-site generation, helping to serve the needs of the site and potentially local demand.	Green
Overall	Overall assessment	The site is a good extension to the existing settlement as in keeping with the existing settlement pattern, however the presence of the Grade I Listed Building to the south of the site and associated Grade II Listed Buildings, as well as as the Flood Zones means development to the south of the site is limited. Further investigation needs to be undertaken to identify the potential access opportunities for the site to unlock land for development. Any development on site would need to be sensitive to listed heritage assets.	Amber



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