SYDENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2026–2041

Plan Made – May 2021

Regulation 15 Submission Version – revised September 2026

Statement assessing the significance of the changes proposed to the existing Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

This statement has been prepared to respond to Regulation 17(e)(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and describes the extent of the changes proposed to the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council considers these changes to constitute material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan, having regard to Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 41-106-20190509).

The Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan was formally 'made' by South Oxfordshire District Council on 20 May 2021, since when it has formed part of that council's development plan. The made plan covers the period to 2034 and contains eight land use policies (SYD1–SYD8) focused primarily on housing development, design, heritage, landscape, local green spaces, settlement separation, important views, and community facilities.

Sydenham Parish Council and its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have prepared a review of the Plan, which was the subject of Regulation 14 consultation from 2 April to 26 June 2026 and was submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council under Regulation 15 on 4 September 2026. The review extends the plan period to 2041 and responds to the following significant changes in the planning landscape since the plan was made:

- The adoption of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (December 2020), which replaced both the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 and saved policies from the Local Plan 2011, and which the made plan predated in its examination stage;
- Substantial revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently on 17 August 2026, which replaced numbered paragraphs with policy codes, and changes to the basic conditions made by sections 98 and 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (in force from 25 March 2026);
- New community evidence gathered through a 2025 village survey and updated consultation since the plan was made;
- The identification through a Call for Sites process of a specific site proposed for allocation for a single or semi-detached dwelling, representing a new land use policy not present in the made plan.

Background

Sydenham is a small rural parish in South Oxfordshire lying between the market town of Thame and the village of Chinnor. The 2021 Census records 137 households in the parish. Sydenham West (the principal settlement, centred on St Mary's Church and The Crown Inn) is classified as a Smaller Village in the South Oxfordshire settlement hierarchy; Sydenham East (centred on the Inn at Emmington) is classified as an Other Village.

The principal policy change in the made plan since it was examined relates to the replacement of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policies by the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The made plan was examined under the Core Strategy 2012 and Local Plan 2011 policy framework, as the Local Plan 2035 had not yet been adopted at the time of examination. All policies in this review have been assessed for alignment with the strategic policies of the Local Plan 2035 and against the basic conditions as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

The made plan contains eight policies (SYD1–SYD8). The review retains all eight original policies, in some cases revised, and adds eight new policies (SYD9–SYD16), bringing the total to sixteen policies. The plan period is extended from 2034 to 2041 to align with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 horizon and to provide an appropriate forward-looking framework.

Changes to the Plan

The following sets out the substantive changes proposed in the reviewed plan. Cosmetic changes (typographical corrections, grammar improvements), factual updates (census population data, updated plan period), and minor wording adjustments that do not change the intent or effect of policies are not individually listed.

Plan Period and Introduction

Extension of plan period from 2034 to 2041 – Minor change. The plan period is extended by seven years to 2041 to align with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and to ensure the neighbourhood plan provides an appropriately current development framework for the parish.

Updated Planning Policy Context (Section 3) – Minor change. The planning policy context has been comprehensively updated throughout to replace all references to the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 and Local Plan 2011 with references to the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. All references to the NPPF have been updated to the August 2026 version, using its policy codes (for example, isolated homes in the countryside at policy HO11; decisions on non-designated heritage assets at policy HE7; retention of key community facilities at policy HC6; Local Green Space at policies HC2 and HC8). The statement of the basic conditions has been updated to reflect the changes made by sections 98 and 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. References to the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041 have been noted where relevant.

Vision and Objectives

The Vision and Objectives of the plan remain unchanged. They continue to reflect the community's overriding aspiration to preserve Sydenham Parish's rural village environment while ensuring appropriate development occurs, recognising the need for a balanced community. The four objectives relating to housing quality, rural character, landscape setting, and heritage are retained.

SYD1 – Village Boundary & Infill Development

Minor change. Policy SYD1 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 policies H8 and H16 in place of Core Strategy policies CSH1 and CSR1. The policy wording and the established settlement boundaries for Sydenham West and Sydenham East are unchanged. Supporting text has been updated to reflect the Local Plan 2035 classification of Sydenham West as a Smaller Village and Sydenham East as an Other Village.

SYD2 – Housing Mix

Minor change. Policy SYD2 is retained with updated cross-references to Local Plan 2035 Policy H11 (Housing Mix) in place of the Core Strategy and saved Local Plan references. The policy requirement for new housing to reflect local housing needs and community survey evidence is unchanged. Supporting text has been updated to incorporate evidence from the 2025 village survey results alongside the original 2018 survey data.

SYD3 – Design

Minor change. Policy SYD3 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 Policies DES1 and DES2 in place of Core Strategy Policy CSQ3. The policy requirement for new development to reflect the character and materials of existing buildings and to respect the Conservation Area is unchanged. A new supporting paragraph referencing the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code has been added to bring the policy context up to date with current national guidance.

SYD4 – Local Heritage Assets

Minor change. Policy SYD4 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 Policies ENV6, ENV7 and ENV8 in place of Core Strategy Policy CSEN3 and saved Local Plan Policies CON5, CON7 and CON16. The NPPF paragraph reference for non-designated heritage assets has been updated to policy HE7 (August 2026 NPPF). The Schedule of Local Heritage Assets at Appendix A is retained without change to designations.

SYD5 – Local Green Space

Minor change. Policy SYD5 is retained with updated NPPF references for Local Green Space designation (now policies HC2 and HC8 of the August 2026 NPPF). All existing Local Green Space designations are retained unchanged, and no additional land is designated. The policy wording has been supplemented with a statement that development within the Local Green Space will

only be supported in very special circumstances. Supporting text has been updated to reflect Local Plan 2035 Policy CF4.

SYD6 – Separation of Settlements

Minor change. Policy SYD6 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 Policy ENV1 in place of Core Strategy Policy CSEN1 and saved Local Plan Policy C4. The policy objective of maintaining meaningful open landscape gaps between Sydenham and the neighbouring settlements of Chinnor and Thame to preserve their separate identities is unchanged.

SYD7 – Important Views

Minor change. Policy SYD7 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 Policies ENV1 and DES2. The catalogue of important views identified in the made plan has been updated to include more specific views, identified by location and with specific images. Supporting text has been updated to reflect the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly AONB) designation and its relevance to the parish's visual setting.

SYD8 – Community Facilities

Minor change. Policy SYD8 is retained with updated references to Local Plan 2035 Policy CF1 in place of Core Strategy Policy CSR3. The NPPF paragraph reference for community facilities has been updated to policies HC4 and HC6 (August 2026 NPPF). The list of protected community facilities is reviewed and updated to reflect the current position of each facility, including noting the status of The Crown Inn and The Inn at Emmington.

SYD9 – Site Allocation (New Policy) – Material Change

Material change. The review introduces a new policy (SYD9) allocating a specific site of approximately 0.06 hectares for a single or semi-detached dwelling. This is the most significant change from the made plan and represents the introduction of a site-specific land use allocation that was not present in the original plan.

The allocation arose from a Call for Sites process, through which four sites were assessed by the Steering Group against criteria including landscape sensitivity, heritage setting, access, flood risk, and compatibility with the settlement boundary and separation policies. The assessment followed an approach consistent with best practice for neighbourhood plan site selection. The selected site was assessed as appropriate, representing a proportionate and justified addition to housing supply in the parish.

The site allocation is for a single or semi-detached dwelling on a 0.06 hectare parcel (land between the Inn at Emmington car park and The Beeches) in Sydenham East. This growth in the parish's housing stock (137 dwellings per the 2021 Census) is more than required with the Other Village classification of Sydenham East under the Local Plan 2035 settlement hierarchy. The allocation is accompanied by design and access criteria within Policy SYD9, consistent with the design principles established by Policy SYD3 and the Character Appraisal.

As a new site allocation, Policy SYD9 necessitated a new SEA and HRA screening exercise. On 26 March 2026 South Oxfordshire District Council determined that no SEA was required and that the Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

The Policies Map has been updated to show the extent of the allocated site.

New Policies SYD10–SYD16 – Design, Landscape, Transport and Climate Change

Material change. The review introduces seven new policies, SYD10 to SYD16, addressing design, landscape, transport and climate change matters not covered by the made plan's eight policies. These new policies respond to the requirements of the NPPF (August 2026) and Local Plan 2035, and to the community survey evidence gathered in 2025. While these are new policies, they address matters that were either implied by the objectives of the made plan or that have become national and local policy requirements in the period since the plan was made. The new policies cover:

- Dark skies and light pollution: Policy SYD10 controls external lighting to protect the rural character, dark night skies and wildlife of the parish (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policies ENV1 and ENV3 and NPPF policy P3);
- Landscape character and setting: Policy SYD11 requires development to respect topography, field patterns, hedgerows and trees (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policies ENV1 and ENV2 and NPPF policies N2 and N3);
- Development size and form: Policy SYD12 requires new development to respect the scale, massing and form of existing development in this small rural village (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policy DES2 and NPPF policy DP3);
- Rural roads and traffic management: Policy SYD13 addresses highway safety on narrow rural lanes without preventing appropriate development (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policy TRANS5 and NPPF policies TR4 and TR6);
- Residential parking provision: Policy SYD14 sets parking standards that reflect local circumstances (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policy TRANS5 and NPPF policy TR2);
- Protection of the historic roofline: Policy SYD15 protects a key feature of the character of the village and its Conservation Area (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policies DES2, ENV6 and ENV8 and NPPF historic environment policies);
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation: Policy SYD16 requires development to incorporate renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable drainage and biodiversity net gain (reflecting Local Plan 2035 Policies DES8, DES9, DES10 and EP4, the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement of the Environment Act 2021, and NPPF policies CC1 to CC3, W3 and F8).

None of these new policies, nor the site allocation in Policy SYD9, change the fundamental nature of the plan, which remains focused on housing development and the conservation of the rural village character of Sydenham Parish. They strengthen and clarify the application of the

plan's existing objectives by giving effect to planning requirements that apply to new development in the parish.

Updated Policies Map

Minor change. The Policies Map and inset maps have been updated to reflect the new SYD9 site allocation and to ensure all policy boundaries remain accurate. All other policy boundaries (settlement boundaries, local green spaces, settlement separation areas, important views) are unchanged from the made plan.

Updates following consultation and submission

The Regulation 14 consultation ran from 2 April to 26 June 2026. The period was extended by six weeks because this Modification Statement was added to the consultation documents part-way through. The Plan was submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council under Regulation 15 on 4 September 2026. Following validation comments from the District Council, the references to national policy in the Plan and its supporting documents have been updated to the NPPF published on 17 August 2026, and the Basic Conditions Statement has been updated for the changes made by sections 98 and 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. These updates correct references and record legal requirements; they do not change any policy of the Plan and do not alter the assessment in this statement.

Conclusion

The changes proposed in this review fall into two categories:

- Minor changes: the extension of the plan period to 2041; the updating of all policy references from the Core Strategy 2012 and Local Plan 2011 framework to the Local Plan 2035 and the August 2026 NPPF; the updating of demographic data to the 2021 Census; and minor wording adjustments to existing policies SYD1–SYD8 that do not alter their intent or effect.
- Material changes: the introduction of seven new policies (SYD10–SYD16) addressing dark skies, landscape character, development size and form, rural roads and traffic, residential parking, the historic roofline and climate change, matters not covered in the made plan; and the introduction of a site allocation policy (SYD9) for a single or semi-detached dwelling on a 0.06 hectare site, with an updated Policies Map.

The Vision, Objectives and overall character of the plan remain unchanged. The plan continues to focus on housing development and the conservation of the rural village environment of Sydenham Parish. The material changes either give clearer expression to matters already implied by the original plan's objectives (the design, landscape, transport and climate policies) or represent a proportionate, evidenced and appropriately scaled addition to the plan's land use framework (the site allocation).

None of the changes, individually or collectively, alter the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan or the ambitions and intentions set out in the made plan. The review strengthens the plan's ability to deliver its established vision while ensuring it remains an effective, legally compliant, and up-to-date part of the development plan framework for South Oxfordshire.

In reaching this view the Parish Council has had regard to Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 41-106-20190509), which gives the addition of a site or sites that is not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan as an example of a material modification that does not change its nature, and the allocation of significant new sites as an example of a modification that does. The single site allocated in Policy SYD9 is small (0.06 hectares, one or two dwellings).

We therefore consider that the changes proposed constitute material modifications which do not change the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan and would require examination but not a referendum.

Prepared by Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of Sydenham Parish Council

May 2026 (revised September 2026)