

# **MILTON MALSOR PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Options for a Neighbourhood Plan**

**2013**

Completed and approved by the Milton Malsor Parish Council 10 December 2013

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## 1: Introduction

Milton Malsor is a small village located within a rural parish (see appendix 1) which is situated 4 miles south of Northampton town centre. The village is separated from the built-up area of Northampton by the M1 motorway north and east of the village.

The Northampton railway loop of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) runs east of the village and the main line of the WCML borders the south of the parish area. The Grand Union Canal borders the west side of the parish area.

There are two 'greens': a small original one overlooked by the school, and a larger one on Green Street which contains the war memorial and very soon the new village sign. The latter green is now recognised as the official 'village green' and is in process of being registered. These greens, together with two pockets of grass and trees in Stockwell and a large grass area with a pond at the Greyhound inn and the two internal fields (one known as the 'Dip' and the other the 'Old Orchard', reinforce the tranquillity of the area and also significantly enhance the setting of the listed church.

The village has had since c.1960 a playing field in Collingtree Road on land leased from SNC. This was substantially upgraded in 2010/11 with National Lottery funding. It was re-designed into an attractive Village Park which is well used by the whole community. Opposite the park is the popular Milton FC football club and grounds. The parish council consider both these green spaces as essential for the village community.

## **2: Facilities**

There is an Anglican Church, a Baptist Chapel, a primary school, a village hall, a village park, a residential home, a day care centre, a large conservation area (see appendix 2), a shop and, in the parish, a motocross facility. A regular half hourly bus service links the residents with Northampton, Milton Keynes, Towcester and Oxford.

There is evidence that a settlement existed on the site over 2000 years ago and the village is mentioned in the Domesday Book; today it comprises some 320 dwellings occupied by about 700 villagers.

## **3: The Neighbourhood**

Government's 2011 Localism Act encourages 'neighbourhoods' to consult with their residents and produce a plan for the future of the area in which they live; in villages parish councils are nominated to take the lead.

Our 'neighbourhood' is defined as the 'Parish of Milton Malsor' and has been registered with the relevant planning authority which is South Northants Council (SNC).

## **4: Why a Neighbourhood Plan?**

This Neighbourhood Plan builds on the Milton Malsor Parish Plan 2005, the comprehensive house to house consultation that was carried out for it, and the resulting observations and recommendations. The most important of these was that: 'Milton Malsor should remain a village separate from Northampton and nearby villages – something which 95% of the 473 respondents deemed 'very important' or 'important.'

Since then a West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan has been developed and, in its current form, does not allow Northampton town to be extended south of the M1 Motorway - the Parish Council fought long and hard for this outcome. However, large scale housing development (1,000+) is planned for Collingtree Park with traffic using the existing exits of which two are onto Towcester Road at 'T' junctions. There is concern about the traffic

impact on the village of this development. The 'Roade Master Plan' will bring housing up to the south-east border of Milton Malsor Parish.

The parish has proven attractive to developers who have formulated several master plans; if implemented these would fill the parish with housing and lead to the destruction of Milton Malsor as a separate rural village with its own character and identity.

## **5: Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan**

Under the Localism Act we have been given the opportunity to set out what residents have said they most want – which is for Milton Malsor to remain an independent village in a green parish - by producing a Neighbourhood Plan, which will be incorporated by SNC in their next 'local plan' and thus safeguard residents' interests for the next 15 years.

Government have made it clear that such a plan must allow for a reasonable increase in housing or it will not be accepted - we cannot just maintain the status quo. As a result, and following thorough consultation, additional homes – both market and affordable - are being proposed on a preferred development site at the edge of the village (see enclosed plan and housing - section 20), while the rest of the parish is to be maintained as undeveloped farming land.

Apart from the primary objective of further housing the neighbourhood has some other planning issues which are set out below.

## **6: The Environment**

Although the village has no through main road, it suffers from 'rat running' at peak traffic times. The parish council have asked Highways - three times – unsuccessfully, to provide one lane road narrowing at the Collingtree Road entrance, and in Rectory Lane, with priority signs, in order to prevent speeding in the built up area. A speed limit of 20 mph rather than 30 mph is also needed.

Sound pollution from the M1, and the ever busier railway line, can be intrusive in certain weather conditions. To help mitigate this, and make our streets more attractive, an ongoing tree planting initiative continues. 7.5 tonne 'no entry signs' have been placed on all access routes to keep out large trucks, but extra traffic generated by illegal use of the Luff site at Milton Trading Estate continues to be a problem, even though landscaping has now been ordered by SNC to mask it visually from the village, although at the time of writing it has not been carried out.

The field between Stockwell Way and the railway acts as a noise barrier and needs to be remain undeveloped. Since 2010 the moto-cross course along the Northampton Road has been professionally managed by the Auto Cycle Union Ltd, which is allowed a maximum of 14 events on Sundays each year. The ACU have responded well to parish council concerns about traffic, noise and hours. We are happy to continue with this arrangement.

Our 'conservation area' is well defined, it protects both the older parts of the built environment and important open spaces. The many listed buildings and two essential open fields at the heart of Milton Malsor must be maintained and grants sought to enhance them.

The present 'village confines' ensure that housing does not spread randomly outwards but do allow infill where possible. We are now under pressure to add further homes, which has to be done in such a way as to preserve the village and its surrounding fields. This has meant enlarging our 'confines' accordingly.

The parish council is concerned that, should the designated sand quarry beyond the railway go ahead, serious dust and noise pollution may be caused in the village. However, after our objections, trucks will not be allowed to pass through Milton Malsor and have to enter and leave the site by a haul route direct to the Northampton Road. As this quarry would operate for at least 10 years, proper controls and monitoring need to be written into any agreement between the County Council and the operator, and enforced.

There are many footpaths leading from the village, some of them are shown in the Domesday book. It is important for residents to ensure that they are not blocked or obscured by landowners.

The parish council has not, for many years, received any requests for allotments and so will not pursue this.

Northampton Rural Housing Association (NRHA) has taken over the Stockwell Way, Stockwell Road and Church Close houses owned by SNC and are completing an upgrade of external areas, house interiors and disabled access. NRHA's management has provided increased parking for residents and improved the quality of the whole area; this should continue.

As a general improvement in the appearance, power cables on the village green and its approaches were 'undergrounded' in 2013. This allowed street lighting to be replaced, using funds from a villager's bequest, by traditional columns and led lamps, with uplighters installed at the war memorial and village sign. This work has enhanced the village environment, and resulted in requests, which the parish council supports, to put all remaining overhead power lines underground to improve the general appearance of the village.

## **7: Welfare**

Raynsford House provides a comfortable, warm, day centre for residents and is well used with lots of activities and a full time visiting manager, an arrangement that we would like to be maintained.

The doctor's surgery at Blisworth is used by most residents and can be reached by bus. It provides a valuable 'in house' dispensary service which we want to see continued.

There is a convenient residential care home in the village which many residents opt to use.

## **8: Transport**

Two bus routes serve the village and provide a half hourly schedule which includes Northampton town. Late services are limited. The last bus to Northampton is at 23.04 and the last two buses to Towcester are at 22.21 and 23.51.

Most homes now own cars and residents' traffic in the village has increased. It is considered desirable to maintain a traditional quiet village atmosphere. To achieve this, and provide better safety for children and the elderly, a 20mph speed limit is needed.

## **9: Communication**

The Parish Council Newsletter began in 2003 on a quarterly basis. A survey showed that it was the main source of information about village events for most people. This has since been replaced by the broader Milton Malsor News which has been well received and will be continued.

The parish council website has been in operation since 2007 and is well designed and well used. It is used to publish the Milton Malsor News and other important information about village affairs; this needs to be continued.

High speed broadband internet connection to the village is urgently needed and will help local business.

## **10: Employment**

The Parish Plan 2005 showed that the majority of working people were employed within 10 miles of the village; it identified no demand for further business units, and no requests have been received since.

The village has employment at the popular Greyhound pub; at an architectural practice; and at two developments on the outskirts housing 10 small business units. No demand for further units has been identified.

## **11: Local Green Space**

The village is fortunate in having the two internal fields, several small 'greens' with mature trees, an active football club, and a playing field which, following consultation, the obtaining of a grant and 2 years work, has been upgraded into an attractive Village Park. This provides a challenging range of play equipment for children of all ages, together with picnic tables, seats and trees; overall, a place for use by the whole community.

All these open spaces must be kept undeveloped and well maintained for residents' ongoing rest and recreation.

The park attracts visitors from surrounding villages but there is only limited parking on the verges; a one way road priority system at the park that is designed to slow traffic and also incorporate extra parking spaces is needed.

## **12: Social**

The village hall has been extensively modernised and well publicised, as a result its usage and annual income has increased. The hall is well managed by an active 'working group' who use accumulated funds to continuously upgrade its facilities, while keeping usage free for the village groups who act as its 'trustees'.

The hall is a success story and needs to continue on this path.

Milton Malsor has a large number of active and varied clubs and societies - an altogether vibrant social scene.

## **13: Youth facilities**

Whilst we have scouts, guides, cubs and beavers – all operating from the village hall, we no longer have a youth club – though the football club do provide training for teenagers. Demand for such a club rises and falls and, with only a small population, having a youth club – though desirable in principle – is not always feasible, even if volunteer organisers can be found.

The Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs and the Parish Council have sent out a brief questionnaire to sound out the demand, availability of volunteers, and possibility of sharing with neighbouring villages. The Park has proven attractive to all ages, but is not so useful in winter when indoor socialising and games become necessary for teenagers.

## **14: Education**

Milton Parochial Primary School is well thought of, has a hall, a computer room, a pleasant play area, an enthusiastic 'Friends of Milton School' support group, is highly rated, and much in demand. More certainty of places for the children of parish residents would be welcomed.

Parking for parents delivering or collecting children is available on the streets or in the village hall car park, and is manageable.

## **15: Faith**

The present parochial arrangements for the parish church seem to provide an adequate service and need to be continued; the Baptist Chapel continues to thrive.

The parish church building deserves to be kept in good order - even as congregations fall - if only as a fine historic monument. Widening its usage is desirable and should be helped by means of a proposed additional room and toilet facility for which funds are being raised.

## **Other neighbourhood needs:-**

### **16: A better local shop**

The one general shop no longer has a post office – despite our objections – though no complaints have been received. Residents use the one at Blisworth village which can be reached by bus.

The present shop holds only a minimal stock; a better range and choice would be welcomed when future owners take over. An alternative shop was run from behind the Compass pub for a while but, despite providing good quality and service, this was a welcome initiative but proved unable to create sufficient demand.

### **17: Village pavements**

Many of these are in a poor state of repair and need urgent resurfacing.

### **18: Physical road narrowing**

This is required at the park to slow traffic and reduce chances of accidents in that now busy area. Parking on the verge outside the football club or the park is the usual solution for visitors with cars. This is not ideal as the road is busy but, as there is no better solution, visitors must be responsible for their own safety. It is expected that these calming measures can be incorporated when the 'development area' is built on, and can also incorporate some parking places for the park. Note that the neighbouring village of Collingtree, part of the borough of Northampton, has partial traffic calming and is understood to be seeking more.

### **19: Crime**

This has been kept in check, even reduced, and police cooperation has improved. The main problem has been anti- social behaviour and vandalism. More visible local policing is needed, preferably using the same officers so they become known and know us – that is the best way to police a small village.

### **20: Village Handyman**

A need for such a person was identified in the Parish Plan 2005. Need fluctuates and, apart from recommending local tradesmen, a full time appointment is not viable.

### **21: Housing**

This is the most important issue in our neighbourhood plan.

In the years since the Parish Plan 2005 was prepared, the village confines have been slowly filling up. The parish council has supported this process whilst opposing any planning applications outside the confines and it will continue to do so.

The need and support for 'affordable housing' was underlined in the 2005 Parish Plan. A 'housing needs survey' was carried out by SNC in 2004, but as progress was slow in finding a

site, it was followed by another in 2011. The latter identified a need for even more homes - 16 in total. SNC and a housing association did prepare plans for a development that would meet this demand but lack of finance has stopped this initiative. The parish council has decided to obtain the long overdue housing by means of a market housing development.

The new houses need to be a mixture of stone and old brick (ie some faced with stone and some with brick) in order to fit in with the present mix in the village and recognise the importance of this site at the village entrance and proximity to the ancient church.

The number of working-age residents aged between 25 and 44 in the village has fallen since 2001 and is below the SNC average and confirms the need for affordable homes in the village. The 15.5% allocated proportion of dwellings in villages shows Milton needs only 18 further homes by 2026. However, we consider that to maintain a vigorous sustainable community is most important and requires additional market housing including 40% of affordable homes.

Our main concern with any affordable housing is to ensure that new affordable homes go to those with a genuine village connection.

Government has decided that villages - like Milton Malsor - need to accommodate a small increase in housing and they cannot stand still.

In the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Rural Areas Plan, Milton Malsor has now been designated as a 'secondary service village' and is slated to accept a 7% increase in housing between 2011 and 2026. At the same time Neighbourhood Plans have been introduced which allow residents to decide how best to meet this obligation and, at the same time, identify any other changes required in their local area.

The parish council consider that 7 to 10% of our existing housing stock (about 30 homes) is a reasonable number to be absorbed without affecting the existing facilities and character of the neighbourhood.

## **22: Neighbourhood Plan background and survey**

The parish council, aware that Milton Malsor has been targeted by developers, decided that, in order to protect the parish, a Neighbourhood Plan was essential. Using the summer 2012 issue of the newsletter all households were made aware of the housing aspect in a preliminary consultation that identified a preferred 'development site'. To incorporate this site, the present village confines will need to be extended.

The Parish Council evaluated all sides of the present village confines in order to find the most suitable location for an extension.

The areas were as follows:

Lower Road\*: To use this site would begin to fill the important gap between Northampton and the village, thus encouraging a merger of the two. The present arrangement, with an open edge towards the countryside, maintains the village's rural nature and acts as a buffer.

Between Stockwell Way and the railway\*: This site has been submitted for planning permission three times in the last few years with all applications rejected by SNC, and also at appeal by different inspectors.

Rectory Lane south side (Leys field): This large open area includes several fine trees with protection orders and an ancient footpath; it gives a rural feel to the village. It is important to keep it undeveloped because it is overlooked by, and enhances, two listed buildings, Milton House, and Mortimers (originally owned by Mortimers).

West of Towcester Road: The fields here which slope away to a stream, allowing an attractive, open view of Milton from the Gayton Road. Any development here would be cut off from the village by the busy main road and never be part of the community.

Between Barn Lane and Collingtree Road\*: This central flat site consists mainly of grassland and some shrub, use of it for housing does not spoil any existing vistas. It is tucked away between Barn Lane and the football club, but not nearer the railway line than the present Stockwell housing. Access can be provided from Collingtree Road and/or Barn Lane.

***Notes** (i) \*These 3 sites were suggested by residents during consultation. (ii) After extension of the confines to include the proposed development site, the parish council does not wish to accept any further development around the village anywhere within the parish boundaries.*

The parish council organised a second consultation in October 2012 by means of a five page explanatory leaflet which was delivered to every village household. In it the merits of three different sites suggested by residents were considered, with a conclusion that the development site proposed between Barn Lane and Collingtree Road was the most suitable.

The main reasons for this are that it would bring the village centre back towards the church and park; allow the incorporation of landscaping with a small 'green' and spinney; have the least long term impact on the village environment; allow a through access road between Collingtree Road and the end of Barn Lane; avoid closing the gap between the village and Northampton; and finally be complete in itself and not attractive for further expansion.

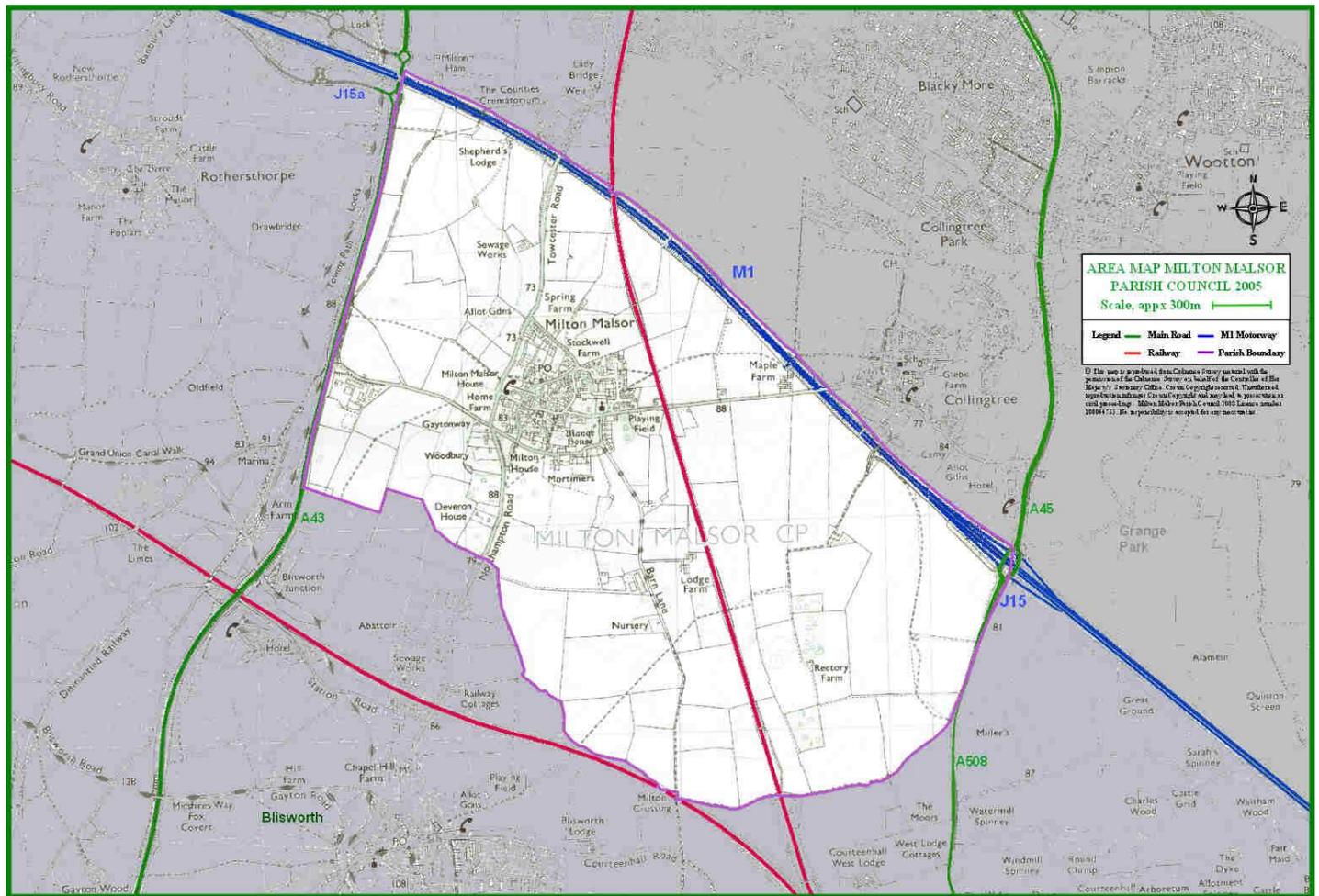
Enclosed with the leaflet was a stamped addressed envelope and a sample letter which asked for replies in support of the proposed development area - from residents on the electoral role - to be sent to the Clerk to the Parish Council. Details were also put on the parish council's website. The survey produced a strong response - from about 36% of registered voters, of whom 97% were in favour. The voting was: **For** the development area: 233, **Against** the development area: 7.

The level of support meets government's requirement for at least 40% of those who vote. It means that the planned 'development area' has been accepted by residents as the way forward and becomes a formal part of this neighbourhood plan.

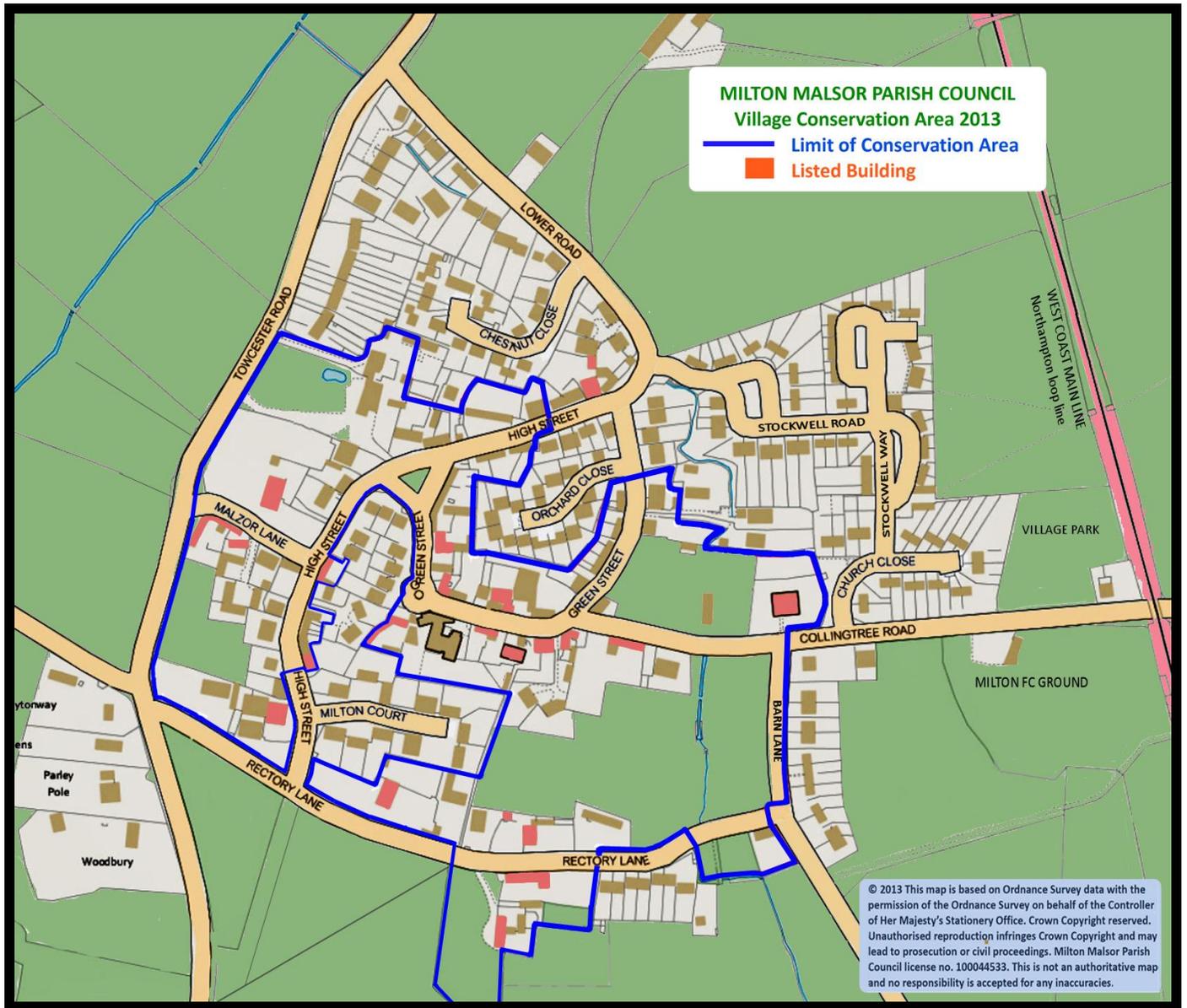
### **23: Conclusion**

Our neighbourhood is important to all its residents. We all need to do our best to ensure that Milton Malsor survives as an independent, rural village, not only for the benefit of those who currently live here but for future generations.

This neighbourhood plan and development area, when adopted by SNC as part of their next Local Plan, will go a long way towards achieving this objective, one that the parish plan identified as a priority in 2005, and one which has now been overwhelmingly reconfirmed by residents in 2012.



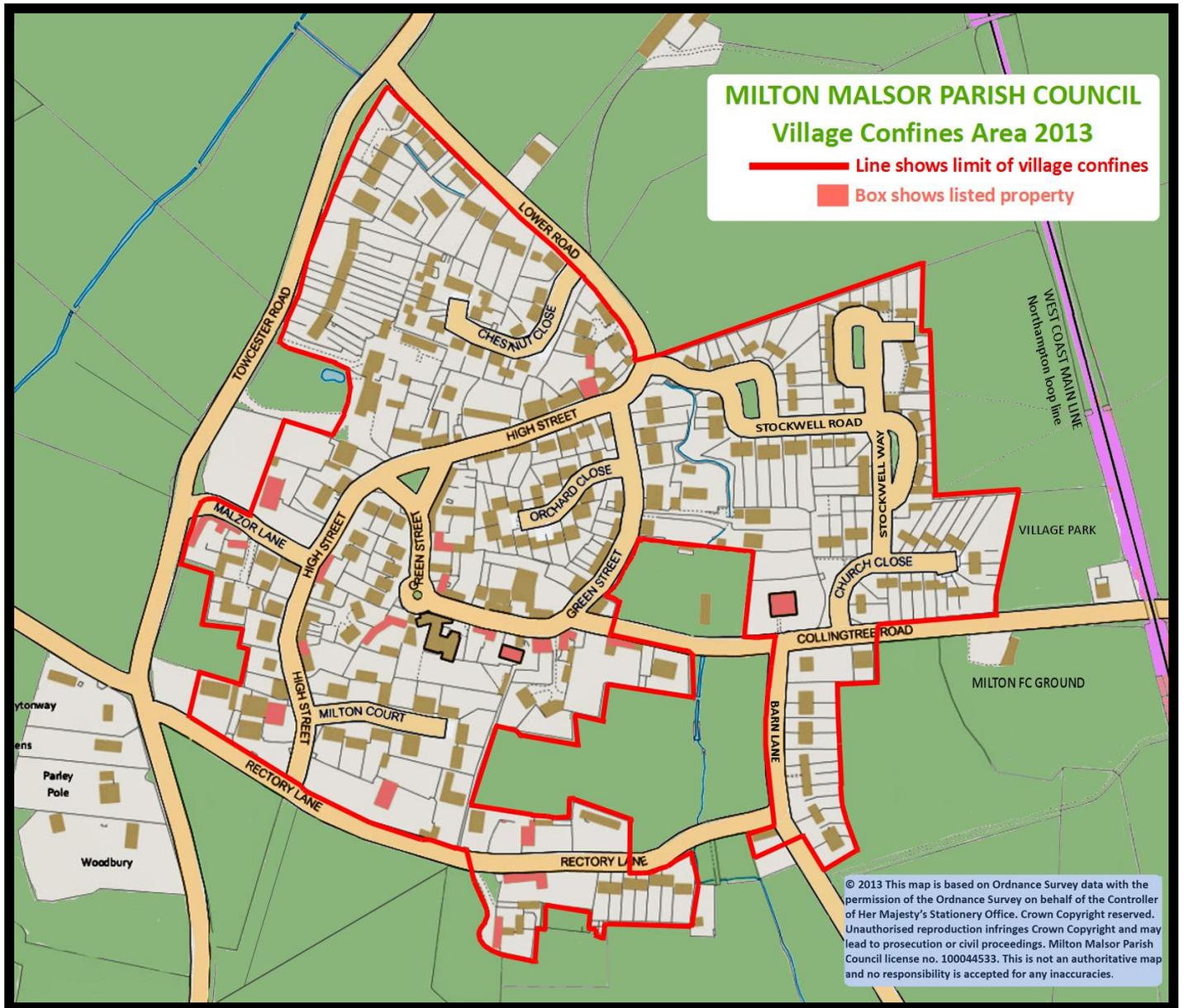
**APPENDIX 1: Map of Milton Malsor Parish**



**APPENDIX 2: Milton Malsor Conservation area 2013**

Scale: appx 500m

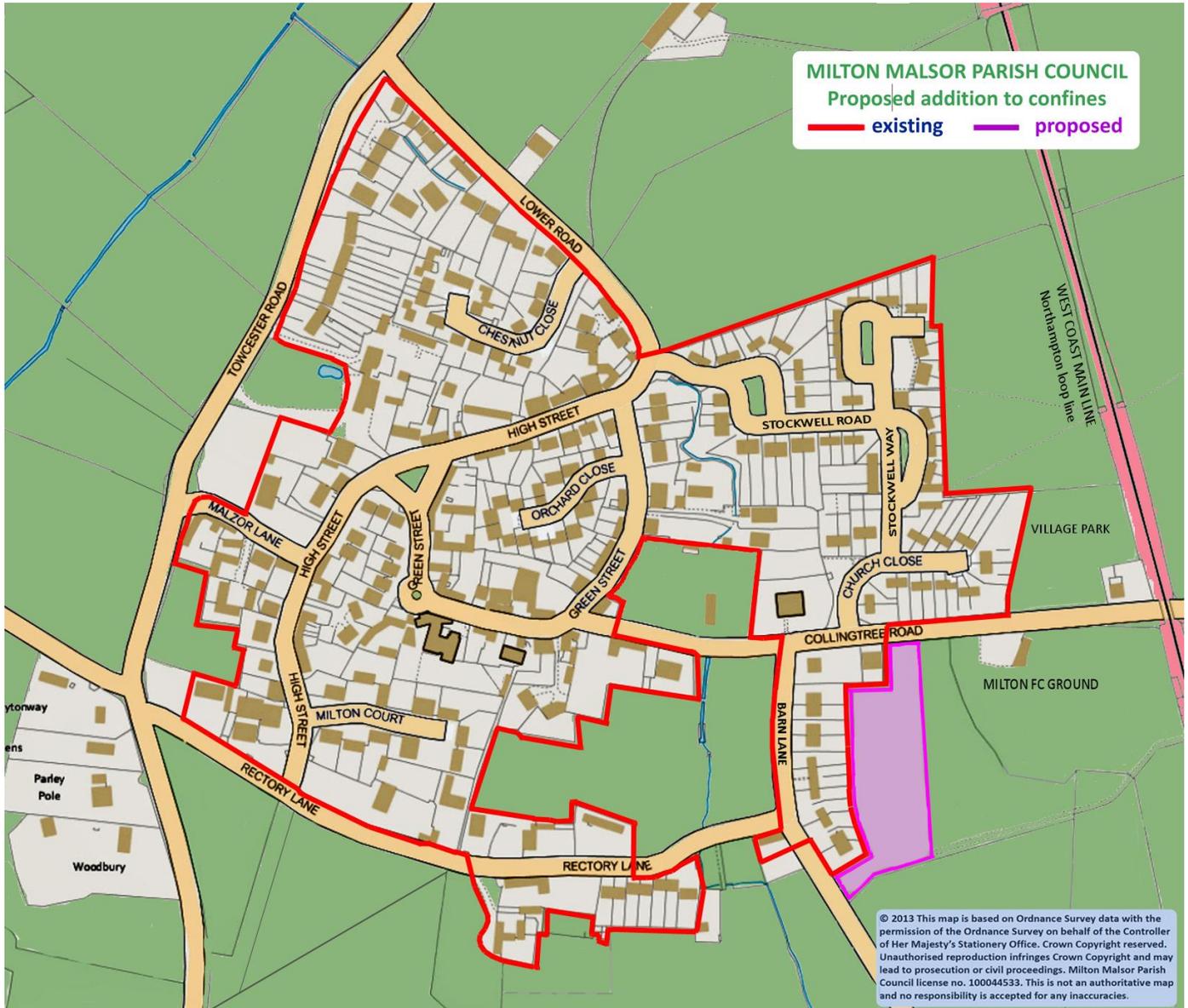




**APPENDIX 3: Existing village confines 2013**

Scale: appx 500m





**APPENDIX 4: Village confines with proposed extension**

Scale: appx 500m



## **Appendix 5: Parish Council Worksheet (SNC) November 2013 – Milton Malsor Parish Council responses**

### **1. What makes your parish unique or special?**

Milton Malsor is an ancient, independent village, with a large conservation area and many listed historic buildings. It is rural with a surrounding green parish, yet convenient for Northampton (4 miles to the town centre) and near the motorway system. It deserves to be kept like this.

### **2: What potential is there to enhance the place?**

Put power and telephone wires underground – a start has already been made. Reduce through traffic.

### **3: Do you have a vision for your village for the next 10-15 years?**

In view of the extensive further house building at Collingtree Park, Roade and south of Northampton, we want to keep our village as a green rural area for tourism, weekend relaxation and country pursuits.

### **4: Has your village completed a 'community questionnaire as part of the local plan?**

We did so for our parish plan 2005. A further consultation took place in 2012 about the Neighbourhood plan (see Appendix 6).

### **5: What needs does your parish have over next 10-15 years?**

The Parochial Primary School is full, otherwise no critical needs. The close proximity of Northampton serves most requirements such as railway and shopping access.

### **6: Has the parish got any hopes or aspirations that it wants to achieve?**

Road narrowing measures at village entrances to reduce through traffic rat running to the motorway and A45. This is likely to increase with further house building in Northampton. We would like to enhance the appearance of the village with all overhead power and telephone lines undergrounded.

### **7: The aim is to create sustainable rural communities. Does your parish share this desire?**

Yes and to keep sustainable we need affordable housing via the development area the villagers have overwhelmingly agreed. (See also section 9).

### **8: Does parish consider existing confines policy should be retained?**

Yes - our neighbourhood plan expands confines to include a development area.

**9: Do you think your parish has the right mix of housing and employment? Any sites for future growth?**

There have been no requests for further businesses in the parish as access to employment in Northampton and other nearby towns is good. We have proposed a development area for market/affordable housing to mostly meet a proven demand for 16 residences.

**10: Do you have any green spaces within the village you wish to see protected from development?**

Yes – there are two vitally important central fields which are in the conservation area. These provide the pleasant open, tranquil character of the village. One also provides a vital open area along the stream linking to the open countryside and affords attractive views of the church. Development proposals for this site with housing this have been rejected for housing development proposals three times including on appeal. There is also a large grass area fronting the Greyhound Inn and its pond. The village also has a well-used village park and football club. Two village greens have recently been enhanced by Milton Parish Council with the help of Western Power’s community scheme with power cable undergrounded and antique-style lampposts installed. This has enhanced the area and a village sign is shortly to be installed. The War Memorial has been floodlit and so will the village sign. All these areas are mentioned in this plan and the pictures below show what can be achieved. **(Pictures L to R: floodlit memorial 2012; views in 2012 and 2013)**



**11: Please advise what consultation you have undertaken within your parish.**

A Parish Plan was prepared in 2003/5 with a comprehensive consultation with residents and later adopted by SNC. The Neighbourhood Plan was prepared in 2012/13 and a further consultation took place with all residents concerning the proposed site for housing.