

Harborough District Local Plan – Inspection Matters, Issues and Questions

The following challenge and proposed improvement/mitigation to the plan are primarily with regard to the impact on Broughton Astley,

Matters 3

Matter 3: Amount and Distribution of Development

Issue 5: Housing Supply

1. Will the Plan provide a supply of deliverable and/or developable sites and/or broad locations to meet the full housing requirement for the whole of the Plan period?

The HDC proposal is for a single large site with significant flooding and transport issues to be mitigated and the multi-site proposal from BAPC.

There are serious gaps in the information regarding the transport and flooding mitigations, and the off-site costs which must be covered by this site make it potentially unviable. Without all of this information, the allocation cannot be considered deliverable.

The Parish Council has put forward a multi-site proposal which is demonstrably deliverable, allows faster build out and integrated with the existing traffic infrastructure. This will provide more houses than the 475 allocation proposed.

1. It is intended that the Plan's housing requirement will be met through new local plan allocations, a small villages requirement, a windfall allowance, commitments (extant planning permissions and neighbourhood plan allocations), and completions since the beginning of the new plan period (1 April 2020). Should the supply prior to the latest calculation of LHN be taken into account?

Broughton Astley's first Neighbourhood Plan successfully delivered over 500 new homes on sustainable sites supported by the residents. The allocation from District at the time of referendum was 283 so the 571 homes eventually delivered is over a 100% excess of building. Local infrastructure (schools, doctors, sewerage & drainage) is already overloaded. No credit has been given to this huge oversupply and should be, as the Broughton Astley NP was supposed to run until 2028. Credit should be given to the additional 288 homes for this new period.

Would the Plan promote the development of a good mix of sites, including small and medium sized sites in accordance with NPPF paragraph 70? Would the Plan provide land to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare?

The allocation of a single large site fails to develop a good mix of sites as intended by the NPPF paragraph 70. The single large site fails to offer 10% of the housing requirement on small sites.

The Broughton Astley Parish Council proposal does meet the NPPF paragraph 70 regulation in terms of using smaller sites and has documented support from local residents. Whilst none of the sites are less than 1 hectare, the Crowfoot Way site is close at 1.2 hectares in total and some of the site is lefty as open space, reducing the built-out area to nearer 1 hectare. This site is for 30 houses.

Plan paragraph 1.10 confirms that the District includes a number of made Neighbourhood Plans. What are these and what would be their relationship to this Plan?

Broughton Astley is justifiably proud of having one of the earliest and most successful Neighbourhood plans in the UK.

The new Local Plan fails to adequately recognise the existing "made" Broughton Astley Neighbourhood plan in terms of housing allocation. The existing plan required a total of 283 new dwelling during the life of that plan (net of completions at the time the plan was adopted). It had successfully delivered over 500 houses on two major sites and two smaller sites. The Parish Council had worked in collaboration to ensure that plan was fully aligned with the District Plan. This time it could be considered that the District Council did not follow due process and did not work collaboratively with the Parish Council who were reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan.

BAPC had started the task of reviewing their NP but were repeatedly urged to delay completing it as it would "not align with the Local Plan. This indicates a pre-disposition in terms of site allocation. The Parish Council had already taken sounding about potential site and strongly urged HDC in a face to face meeting on the 6/8/2024 not to make Frolesworth Road a single preferred site based on the grounds of flooding, traffic impact at the Bulls Head cross road, overall traffic flow through the village amongst other things. This divergence of view was supported by the extensive public consultation carried out by BAPC in support of the Neighbourhood Plan.

When confronted with this clear difference of opinion on the future development of Broughton Astley, HDC proposed creating and signing a Memorandum of Understanding which they explained would give BAPC an opportunity to present the results of the public consultation and put their proposal for a modification to the LP to allocate the four sites they proposed instead of Frolesworth Road to the Inspectors. Despite agreeing in principle, this MoU failed to be progressed by HDC and communications from HDC ceased in April 2026 despite repeated attempts by BAPC to get a response. It only came to light after the August inspection of the LP that the existence draft MoU was not presented to the inspector. It is felt this is a material factor when considering the relationship with the Local Plan.

The net result of these delays is that BAPC were forced to include in the NP, only one of the preferred sites and the HDC preferred Frolesworth site. The new Neighbourhood Plan will go to referendum on the 26th of November 2026.

This means that the Neighbourhood Plan is forced to include $138 + 550 = 688$ dwelling, far in excess of the 475 allocation. The situation is now that two of the BAPC preferred sites have had their planning applications approved meaning that 120 of the 475 allocation is already in place. If the two other preferred sites were included in the LP rather than the Frolesworth road site then 508 new dwellings would be delivered.

As it stands now Broughton Astley could suffer a minimum of 670 houses (Frolesworth Road 550 plus Blockley Road 90 and Crowfoot Way 30), a more probable quantity of 708 new homes and a potential of 1038 which will far outstrip the supporting infrastructure.

Proposed Improvement to Local Plan

The proposed improvement to the LP is for the site allocation for Broughton Astley to be modified in line with the correctly conducted full public consultation. This would make it compliant with the

intent of NNF paragraph 7. It would also make it more deliverable, as per the NNPF guidance, avoid the traffic issues in the centre of the village, not cost over £1m in questionable traffic light installations, not create an enhanced hazard to children & pedestrians walking to school and negatively impact the heritage/historical War Memorial site. The Neighbourhood Plan would be revised and brought into full alignment.

The Panel notes the Council's response to the Panel's PQ16 [HDC2]. If the Panel were to decide that the Plan's housing supply prior to the latest calculation of LHN should be discounted from its housing requirement, what is the implication for the Plan housing requirement?

If the prior "excess completions" were taken into consideration then Broughton Astley's allocation would significantly reduce from 475 to 187 which could easily be accommodated on the sites identified by BAPC and the public consultation. The Wytham villa site of 138 plus the two sites which have now come forward Blockey Road (90) & Crowfoot Way (30) would make 258, again an excess of completions if this allowance were considered.

The current situation could result in these two sites (120) plus Frolesworth road (now 550) and the Wytham Villa site (138) giving a total of 808 new dwelling which will overwhelm the current infrastructure including, but not limited to, health provision, sewage treatment, traffic management. This excess allocation is a 70% oversupply against the 475 allocation and a 432% over allocation if an allowance were made for the previous over supply.

Would the Plan deliver an appropriate balance between size of site, given the longer lead in times associated with larger sites? Would the Plan's reliance on large strategic sites, including East of Lutterworth Strategic Development Area (SDA), put delivery at undue risk? And if so, how would this be mitigated?

The Local Plan reliance on a single large site for Broughton Astley, namely Frolesworth Road, fails to strike a balance in terms of deliverability.

It has the largest environmental impact and requires massive traffic works to mitigate the excess traffic load which would go through the Bulls Head cross roads.

In stark contrast, the four sites proposed by BAPC do not suffer from these constraints. They build on the existing road network and spread the load more effectively onto the B581 Broughton Way bypass. They avoid excessive traffic at this key crossing which will increase the risk to children walking to school. This increased risk is likely to encourage more parents to drive to school thus increasing traffic movements and increasing the environmental damage.

Proposed Improvement to the Local Plan.

The proposed mitigation is that Frolesworth Road be dropped and the four sites proposed by BAPC are adopted in the Local Plan, reducing risk, speeding up delivery and minimising the environmental and social impact.

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Matters 5

Matter 5: Climate and Environment

Issue 2: Heritage and Rural Character

Policy DS04 Development Strategy: Preserving and Enhancing our Heritage and Rural Character

Is the requirement in criterion 2 of Policy DS04 for development in Areas of Separation to avoid coalescence and preserve the existing visual and physical separation between settlements compatible with the extent and delivery of the following site allocations, which partly overlap Areas of Separation in the Plan:

Protecting the rural character of Sutton-In-The-Elms is an important requirement for the new Local Plan. It was highlighted in the existing made Broughton Astley Neighbourhood plan and is in the revised NP going to referendum in November 2026. The residents have repeatedly made clear that they wish to retain the area of separation between the main part of Broughton Astley and Sutton-In-The-Elms to protect the rural nature of the area.

The current draft of the Local Plan does not identify this area specifically and any protection relies on the general policy wording.

BAPC repeatedly asked for the area of separation between Broughton Astley and Sutton-In-The-Elms to be added to the table or for an appendix to be added to the Local Plan giving a more exhaustive list of AoS across the District. HDCs response has been that the generic wording would suffice however experience shows that developers will continue to attack the existing protection for this valued area of separation.