

# **GREAT EASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Examination,  
A Report to Harborough District Council

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**Contents**

**1, Introduction**

**2, Basic Conditions and Development Plan Status**

**3, Background Documents and the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area**

**4, Public Consultation**

**5, The Neighbourhood Plan: Introductory Section**

**6, The Neighbourhood Plan: Policies**

**7, The Neighbourhood Plan: Other Matters**

**8, Summary**

**9, Referendum**

## Introduction

### The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1 Where modifications are recommended, they are presented as bullet points and highlighted in **bold print**, with any proposed new wording in *italics*.
- 2 This Report provides the findings of the examination into the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan (referred to as the Neighbourhood Plan).
- 3 Neighbourhood planning provides communities with the power to establish their own policies to shape future development in and around where they live and work.

*“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need.”* (Paragraph 183, National Planning Policy Framework)

- 4 The Neighbourhood Plan was prepared by the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee, on behalf of Great Easton Parish Council.
- 5 As set out on page 2 of the Basic Conditions Statement, submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan, Great Easton Parish Council is the *Qualifying Body*, ultimately responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in line with the aims and purposes of neighbourhood planning, as set out in the Localism Act (2011), the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Planning Practice Guidance (2014).
- 6 This Examiner's Report provides a recommendation with regards whether the Neighbourhood Plan should go forward to a Referendum. Were it to go to Referendum and achieve more than 50% of votes in favour, then the Plan would be *made* by Harborough District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan would then be used to determine planning applications and guide planning decisions in the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area.

Role of the Independent Examiner

- 7 I was appointed by Harborough District Council, with the consent of the Qualifying Body, to conduct an examination and provide this Report as an Independent Examiner. I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Neighbourhood Plan and I possess appropriate qualifications and experience.
- 8 I am a chartered town planner and an experienced Independent Examiner of Neighbourhood Plans. I have extensive land, planning and development experience, gained across the public, private, partnership and community sectors.
- 9 As the Independent Examiner, I must make one of the following recommendations:
  - that the Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to Referendum, on the basis that it meets all legal requirements;
  - that the Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, should proceed to Referendum;
  - that the Neighbourhood Plan does not proceed to Referendum, on the basis that it does not meet the relevant legal requirements.
- 10 If recommending that the Neighbourhood Plan should go forward to Referendum, I must then consider whether the Referendum Area should extend beyond the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area to which the Plan relates.

Neighbourhood Plan Period

- 11 A neighbourhood plan must specify the period during which it is to have effect. The front cover of the Neighbourhood Plan clearly specifies that the document covers the period:

*"2017 to 2031."*

- 12 In addition, the Basic Conditions Statement submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan confirms, on page 2, that:

*"The plan period for the Neighbourhood Plan is 2017 to 2031..."*

- 13 Taking the above into account, the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies the relevant requirement in respect of specifying the plan period.

Public Hearing

- 14 According to the legislation, *when the Examiner considers it necessary* to ensure adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case, then a public hearing must be held.
- 15 However, the legislation establishes that it is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held without a public hearing – by written representations only.
- 16 Further to consideration of the information submitted, I confirmed to Harborough District Council that I was satisfied that the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan could be examined without the need for a Public Hearing.
- 17 In making the above decision I was mindful that the Neighbourhood Plan has emerged through robust consultation (see *Public Consultation*, later in this Report) and that people have been provided with significant and appropriate opportunities to have their say.

## **2. Basic Conditions and Development Plan Status**

### **Basic Conditions**

- 18 It is the role of the Independent Examiner to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the “basic conditions.” These were *set out in law*<sup>1</sup> following the Localism Act 2011. A neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions if:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union (EU) obligations; and
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.<sup>2</sup>
  - An independent examiner must also consider whether a neighbourhood plan is compatible with the Convention rights.<sup>3</sup>
- 19 In examining the Plan, I am also required, under Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated Neighbourhood Area in line with the requirements of Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004;

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Prescribed for the purposes of paragraph 8(2) (g) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act by Regulation 32 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The Convention rights has the same meaning as in the Human Rights Act 1998.

- the Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the 2004 PCPA (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one Neighbourhood Area);
- the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.

20 Subject to the content of this Report, I am satisfied that these three points have been met.

21 In line with legislative requirements, a Basic Conditions Statement was submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan. This sets out how, in the qualifying body's opinion, the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions.



European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Obligations

- 22 I am satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan has regard to fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the ECHR and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998 and there is no substantive evidence to the contrary.
- 23 In the above regard, I note that Information has been submitted to demonstrate that people were provided with a range of opportunities to engage with plan-making in different places and at different times. Representations have been made to the Plan, some of which have resulted in changes and the Consultation Statement submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan provides a summary of responses and shows the outcome of comments.

European Union (EU) Obligations

- 24 The Basic Conditions Statement states that the Neighbourhood Area does not include, and is not close to, any European site and confirms that a Habitat Regulations Assessment is not required. There is no evidence to the contrary.
- 25 There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal<sup>4</sup>. However, in some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

- 26 In this regard, national advice states:

*"Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects."*  
(Planning Practice Guidance<sup>5</sup>)

- 27 National advice then goes on to state<sup>6</sup> that the draft plan:

*"...must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan's preparation..."*

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<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 026, Ref: 11-027-20150209, Planning Practice Guidance

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 027, ibid

<sup>6</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID: 11-028-20150209.

28 This process is often referred to as a screening report, determination, statement or assessment. If the screening report identifies likely significant effects, then an environmental report must be prepared.

29 In this regard, Harborough District Council issued the "*Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination*" (December 2016). This concludes that:

*"...it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan...As such, the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken."*

30 The statutory bodies, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency have been consulted. Neither Natural England nor the Environment Agency have raised concerns or objections with the conclusions of Harborough District Council and in this regard, Natural England states that it:

*"...does not consider that the plan will have any likely significant effects on any internationally or nationally designated nature conservation sites and welcomes the broad principles of the plan and some of the specific policy proposals. It is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and set within the context of Harborough District Council's existing Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan."*

31 In contrast, Historic England has stated that:

*"...SEA is necessary in order to provide sufficient assessment of the housing proposals in the plan to comply with the requirements of the NPPF."*

32 However, Historic England provides no specific evidence to counter the assessment undertaken by Harborough District Council in the published Screening Report. Rather, it refers to its own more general guidance and suggests that the Neighbourhood Plan may be unsound. "*Soundness*" is not a relevant test – I refer to the basic conditions earlier in this Report.

33 The evidence submitted, in the form of the Screening Report provides relevant information to demonstrate that it is unlikely that there will be any significant environmental effects arising. There is no substantive evidence to counter this.

- 34 In addition to the above, national guidance establishes that the ultimate responsibility for determining whether a draft neighbourhood plan meets EU obligations lies with the local planning authority:

*"It is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure that all the regulations appropriate to the nature and scope of a neighbourhood plan proposal submitted to it have been met in order for the proposal to progress. The local planning authority must decide whether the draft neighbourhood plan is compatible with EU regulations"* (Planning Practice Guidance<sup>7</sup>).

- 35 In undertaking the work that it has, Harborough District Council has raised no objections nor any concerns with regards European obligations. Taking this and the above into account, I conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions in respect of meeting European obligations.

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<sup>7</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID: 11-031-20150209,

### **3. Background Documents and the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area**

#### Background Documents

36 In undertaking this examination, I have considered various information in addition to the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan. This has included (but is not limited to) the following main documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) (2012)
- Planning Practice Guidance (2014)
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
- The Localism Act (2011)
- The Neighbourhood Plan Regulations (2012) (as amended)
- Harborough District Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2028 (2011)
- Basic Conditions Statement
- Consultation Statement
- Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination

Also:

- Representations received

37 In addition, I spent an unaccompanied day visiting the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area.

Great Easton Neighbourhood Area

- 38 Great Easton Neighbourhood Area coincides with the boundary of Great Easton Parish, plus an area including Bringhurst School, as it provides the *“local school for Great Easton children and the Neighbourhood Plan would potentially have a positive impact on a number of factors...”* The Consultation Statement submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan confirms that the inclusion of Bringhurst School was endorsed by Bringhurst, Drayton and Nevill Holt Parish Meeting, as well as the School itself.
- 39 The plan provided on page 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan delineates the location of the Neighbourhood Area and its boundary.
- 40 Both the Neighbourhood Plan, on page 6, and the Basic Conditions Statement, on page 4, confirm that Harborough District Council approved the designation of Great Easton as a Neighbourhood Area on 13 January 2015. This satisfies a requirement in line with the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan under section 61G (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

## **4. Public Consultation**

### Introduction

- 41 As land use plans, the policies of neighbourhood plans form part of the basis for planning and development control decisions. Legislation requires the production of neighbourhood plans to be supported by public consultation.
- 42 Successful public consultation enables a neighbourhood plan to reflect the needs, views and priorities of the local community. It can create a sense of public ownership, help achieve consensus and provide the foundations for a 'Yes' vote at Referendum.

### Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

- 43 A Consultation Statement was submitted to Harborough District Council alongside the Neighbourhood Plan. The information within it sets out who was consulted and how, together with the outcome of the consultation, as required by the neighbourhood planning *regulations*<sup>8</sup>.
- 44 Taking the information provided into account, there is evidence to demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan comprises a "*shared vision*" for the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area, having regard to Paragraph 183 of the Framework.
- 45 The Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee was formed late in 2014, following the Parish Council's decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. A Village Consultation Event to launch the plan-making process was held in November 2014 and this was followed by the launch of a website and social media page.

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<sup>8</sup>Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.



- 46 In April 2015, following a letter to various stakeholders, a questionnaire was produced and hand-delivered to all households. This was combined with a Housing Needs Survey and resulted in a 60% response rate. The findings were collated and informed the early stages of plan development. A separate school questionnaire was produced to gauge the views of young people
- 47 A letter was sent to landowners and potential developers in October 2015, followed by a Village Consultation Event In November 2015. A subsequent event providing for potential developer presentations and a third Village Consultation Event preceded the six week Draft Consultation period which took place during September and October 2016.
- 48 The Draft Consultation was supported by pre-event letters and contact with stakeholders, landowners and other identified persons. Copies of the draft plan were provided in various locations, as well as on the website. Responses to the Draft Consultation were collated, considered and informed the Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 49 Evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the plan-making process was widely publicised via posters on a notice board, which was positioned in the Village Shop for Neighbourhood Plan purposes; as well as by letters, including three newsletters delivered to every household, and e-mails. The agendas and minutes of all 22 meetings of the Advisory Committee were made available on the website and notice board.
- 50 The Consultation Report provides evidence to show that the Neighbourhood Plan was supported by public consultation. Community engagement was encouraged throughout the plan-making process. Matters raised were considered and the reporting process was transparent.
- 51 Taking all of the above into account, I am satisfied that the consultation process was robust.

## **5. The Neighbourhood Plan – Introductory Section**

52 The final part of the consultation section in the Neighbourhood Plan has been overtaken by events. There is also an error on page 11. I recommend:

- **Delete the last Para on page 8 and the first Para on page 9 ("The draft...planning policy").**
- **Page 11, penultimate line, change to "*...indications that CO2 emissions are linked to the...*"**



## **6. The Neighbourhood Plan – Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

### A Sustainable Great Easton

#### **Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

- 53 Policy SD1 is a general statement about the presumption in favour of sustainable development rather than a land use planning policy. The Neighbourhood Plan itself does not “*consider*” development proposals, rather, applications for development are considered against the Policies of the development plan, of which the Neighbourhood Plan, if made, would form part.
- 54 Other than repeat the “*golden thread*” of sustainability identified in Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the Policy does little to provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal, having regard to Paragraph 154 of the Framework. There is already a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the content of the Policy conflicts with the supporting text immediately below it, in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan not being intended to replace existing policies, but to add Great-Easton specific policies.
- 55 I recommend:
- **Delete Policy SD1**
  - **Provide new Paragraph in the supporting text, to replace Policy SD1: “*In accordance with national planning policy, as set out in Paragraph 14 of the Framework, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the Neighbourhood Plan reflects this positive approach to planning.*”**

**Policy SD2: General Policy Principle**

- 56 Similarly to Policy SD1, Policy SD2 simply provides general information, rather than a land use planning Policy. It also creates the potential for confusion through a possible inference that national and District-wide plans and policies may not apply alongside Neighbourhood Plan Policies.
- 57 Planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area will be considered against the policies of the development plan. If there is a made Neighbourhood Plan, then that will form part of the development plan. This reflects the development plan-led planning system.
- 58 It is unnecessary to repeat existing Policy and in addition, Policy SD2 is imprecise. I recommend:
- **Delete Policy SD2**

**Policy SD3: Limits to Development**

- 59 To provide for sustainable development, Paragraph 16 of the Framework establishes that neighbourhoods should

*"...plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area..."*

- 60 Policy SD3 seeks to achieve this by directing development to within the built-up area, or "*Limits to Development*," of Great Easton. In so doing, boundaries are drawn to provide for sustainable growth within the village during the plan period. Great Easton is recognised as a Rural Centre in the Core Strategy, where "*very limited small scale infill development*" may be appropriate (Core Strategy Policy CS17 "*Countryside, Rural Centres and Rural Villages*"). In this way, Policy SD3 is in general conformity with the Core Strategy.
- 61 Evidence has been provided to demonstrate that plan-makers have taken relevant, up-to-date factors into account and there is later reference in the Neighbourhood Plan to emerging District-wide policy and housing growth. I note that the Limits to Development would provide for future growth, having regard to future needs.
- 62 The supporting text to Policy SD3 suggests that "*it would not be acceptable*" for there to be development in the open countryside. However, there is no evidence to substantiate this point. National policy provides for various forms of development that may be appropriate in the countryside. Focusing development within settlements does not equate to the same thing as preventing any form of development elsewhere and such an approach would fail to have regard to national policy.
- 63 I recommend:
- **Supporting text to Policy SD3, page 18, penultimate Para, change to "*...is best located. Focusing development within Limits to Development reflects the Core Strategy's objective of focusing development in the most sustainable locations.*" (delete rest of Para)**

## Housing

### **Policy H1: Housing Provision; and Policy H3: Housing Allocations**

- 64 Chapter 6 of the Framework, *"Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes,"* sets out a requirement to *"boost significantly the supply of housing"* (Paragraph 47) and Paragraph 184 requires that neighbourhood plans:

*"...should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan."*

- 65 The Core Strategy is out of date in respect of housing and in such circumstances, Planning Practice Guidance is explicit in stating that neighbourhood plans *"can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan"*<sup>9</sup> Indeed, neighbourhood plans provide an important opportunity to give communities *"direct power"* to provide up to date planning policy that may otherwise not exist due to the absence of an up to date Local Plan.
- 66 Policy H1 seeks to establish a housing target, having regard to relevant information. In this regard, there is evidence to demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan has been positively prepared with the aim of providing for sustainable growth. Taking into account emerging District-wide policy and evidence associated with it, plan-makers have sought to identify a level of growth and identify locations for development. I note earlier in this Report that the plan-making process has been supported by robust consultation.

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<sup>9</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID:41- 009-20160211.

- 67 Whilst Policy H1 essentially establishes that the Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for 35 dwellings, the Policy is somewhat confusing. Essentially, it states what another Policy (Policy H3) does and adds some non-land use planning policy detail in respect of how the number of houses allocated has been reached. This results in an imprecise Policy. In this regard, Planning Practice Guidance<sup>10</sup> states:

*“A policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.*”

- 68 Furthermore, it is not clear why the Policy refers to 35 dwellings as “a target.” The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear, elsewhere, that it supports sustainable development. Essentially, the 35 dwelling figure comprises a minimum level of housing required to provide for sustainable growth, whereas the word “target” implies a maximum figure. Such an approach may place an obstacle in the way of sustainable development, in conflict with the national policy presumption in its favour.
- 69 Whilst Figure 2 shows the general location of each of the housing allocations, it is difficult to identify precise site boundaries due to the scale and size of the plan and I make a recommendation in this regard below.
- 70 There is no need for Policy H1 to refer to windfall development, which is considered in another Policy in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 71 The supporting text to Policy H3 sets out how the allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan were determined. This, together with supporting evidence and taking into account earlier comments regarding consultation, demonstrates that allocations emerged through a clear and transparent process, proportionate to neighbourhood planning.

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<sup>10</sup> Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 41-042-20140306



- 72 An objection has been received from a landowner's agent, promoting a site not allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. As set out earlier, a Neighbourhood Plan is examined against the basic conditions. It does not comprise a "beauty parade" of sites. Whilst the landowner's agent considers its site to be better than those allocated, I note that, whilst by their very nature, site assessments can involve subjective views, the allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan have emerged through a process appropriate to neighbourhood planning which is fully reflective of the community's "*direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need*" (Paragraph 183, the Framework).
- 73 Together, the allocations provide for sustainable growth and have regard to the Framework's required to "*boost significantly the supply of housing.*" There is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to allocated an additional, or alternative site, in order for it to meet the basic conditions.
- 74 However, the use of the phrase "*will be permitted*" in Policy H3 runs the risk of pre-determining the planning application process, as it fails to allow for all relevant considerations, such as balancing relevant benefits against possible harm. In this way, the Policy could place an obstacle in the way of the achievement of sustainable development.
- 75 The Policies of the Neighbourhood Plan should be read as a whole. The cross-referencing to other Policies within Policy H3 is cumbersome, confusing and unnecessary. It detracts from the clarity and precision of the Policy.
- 76 Policy H3 makes unusual references to heritage assets. The fact that there are no Listed Buildings within various sites or their settings is not a land use planning policy. In addition, it is a requirement for all development to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, as set out in Chapter 12 of the Framework, "*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.*" A requirement to simply "*protect Listed Buildings and their setting*" is vague, imprecise and has no regard to the detailed requirements of the Framework. No substantive evidence is provided to justify such a significant departure from national policy.
- 77 Policy H3 seeks to impose a planning obligation in respect of something to which it is not party and over which it has no control. Furthermore, it seeks to impose undefined "*other terms,*" yet to be agreed, on other parties. This element of Policy H3 is imprecise.

- 78 It is unclear why Policy H3 allocates land for a single dwelling for a rural worker when national policy provides for such dwellings, subject to demonstrating need. No substantive evidence is provided in this regard.
- 79 It is unclear why the provision of "*pedestrian access*" in one place relates directly to the allocation of land somewhere else. Planning obligations must be directly related to development, as set out in Paragraph 204 of the Framework. They must also be necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms and it is unclear how "*providing for a permissive path for pedestrian access*" as a contribution to something that does not exist meets this test. In addition, planning obligations need to be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to development. There is no evidence that Policy H3 achieves this.
- 80 It is not clear why just one of the allocations should provide a single house of three bedrooms or fewer. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan's proposed provision of just one house with three bedrooms or fewer would satisfy local need.
- 81 The specific numbers apportioned to each site by the Neighbourhood Plan are not supported by detailed masterplans, demonstrating viability. Paragraph 173 of the Framework requires "*careful attention to viability and costs.*" I take this into account in the recommendations below.
- 82 There is a typographical error on page 21. Policy H3 does not identify housing mix and the supporting text is imprecise in this regard. The final paragraphs of supporting text on page 26 appear to set out the Policy before the Policy itself. This is unnecessarily repetitive.
- 83 Taking all of the above into account, I recommend:
- **Combine Policies H1 and H3, to create a new "*Policy H1 - Housing Allocations*"**
  - **New Policy H1 to be worded "*Land is allocated for residential development on the following sites (see plans below): Rear of 2 High Street (around 11 dwellings); Adjacent to Barnsdale House (around 6 dwellings); Rear of 28 Broadgate (around 13 dwellings); Rear of 14-18 Caldecott Road (around 4 dwellings).*"**
  - **Page 21, second Para, add "*...stock comprises 278 dwellings, primarily...*"**

- Page 26, first line, delete “, together with the mix,”
- Page 26, delete last Para of supporting text
- Page 26 delete “Allocations are as follows...three bedrooms or fewer”
- Add to remaining supporting text on page 26 *“The landowner of land Adjacent to Barnsdale House has committed to ensuring that, as part of the development of the site, permissive pedestrian access to an area of former railway track elsewhere will be provided, as a contribution towards the creation of a circular path for the benefit of the people of Great Easton.”*



**Policy H2: Priority to be Given to Brownfield Sites**

- 84 The first part of Policy H2 states that brownfield sites should be prioritised. This conflicts with the housing allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan, which set out no order of priority. Furthermore, no indication is provided of how the Neighbourhood Plan will prioritise brownfield land. The Policy is imprecise, it fails to provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal and does not meet the basic conditions.
- 85 The second part of the Policy requires all development to enhance the significance and setting of a Listed Building. Such an onerous requirement has no regard to Chapter 12 of the Framework, referred to above. No justification is provided for the direct conflict with national policy as it applies to the conservation of heritage assets and there is nothing to demonstrate that the approach proposed would have regard to Paragraph 173 of the Framework in respect of viability.
- 86 I recommend:
- **Delete Policy H2**
  - **Delete supporting text on page 24**

**Policy H4: Windfall Sites**

87 Policy H4 is a positive land use planning Policy that provides for sustainable growth by allowing for small scale windfall development, subject to respecting local character. However, as worded, the Policy requires windfall development to meet "*the identified housing requirement for Great Easton.*"

88 In the above regard, another Policy of the Neighbourhood Plan allocates land in respect of identified requirements. Windfall sites are different to allocated sites. They provide for unidentified development opportunities.

89 I recommend:

- **Delete Criterion b) of Policy H4**

**Policy H5: Reserve Site**

- 90 The supporting text to Policy H5 states that the Reserve Site it refers to is detached from Great Easton (and so does not relate to the Limits of Development) but can be "*sustainable in its links to*" Caldecott.
- 91 During my site visit, I observed the Reserve Site to be in a relatively isolated location, surrounded by countryside and some distance away from Caldecott. Caldecott itself is a hamlet with very few apparent services and facilities.
- 92 The analysis of the Reserve Site undertaken by plan-makers states that the site is "*unsustainable*" due to its location, that there is no access to public transport and that Caldecott Parish Council "*have not responded positively.*"
- 93 Given that the supporting information to the Neighbourhood Plan identifies the site as unsustainable, it is difficult to understand why the site is allocated for development. In the absence of significant, substantive evidence to support the allocation of a site that conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan's clear emphasis on focusing development within the Limits of Development, I recommend:
- **Delete Policy H5**
  - **Delete supporting text on page29**

**Policy H6: Housing Mix**

94 Paragraph 50 of the Framework requires planning for a:

*"...wide choice of high quality homes...a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends..."*

95 Policy H6 has regard to this by requiring housing development to provide a mixture of housing types in response to local needs. However, as set out, the Policy is imprecise. It states that development should *"specifically meet identified local needs"* but does not establish what these might be, other than present a vague requirement for *"priority"* to be given to houses of up to three bedrooms and bungalows for older people. No indication of how priority might be given is provided.

96 Consequently, Policy H6 is imprecise and does not provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal.

97 The last part of Policy H6 requires 50% of all homes to be built to Building Regulations Part M2. No evidence is provided to demonstrate that such a requirement has regard to Paragraph 173 in respect of viability and deliverability. Further, no information is provided as to how the Neighbourhood Plan might control Building Regulations.

98 Part of the supporting text reads as though it was a Policy, which it is not.

99 I recommend:

- **Change Policy H6 to: *"New development should provide for a mixture of housing types, having regard to identified local housing needs. The provision of bungalows suitable for elderly people and dwellings of up to three bedrooms will be supported."* (delete rest of Policy).**
- **Supporting text, page 30, second Para, delete second sentence (*"Housing developments...local community."*)**
- **Supporting text, page 30, delete final sentence**

**Policy H7: Affordable Housing**

- 100 Whilst national policy supports the provision of affordable housing where it is needed, it does not require 40% affordable housing, as set out in the supporting text on page 33 the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 101 However, Core Strategy Policy CS3 requires a minimum of 40% of dwellings to be affordable and Policy H7, in calling for the same percentage, is in general conformity with the Core Strategy. Policy H7 only requires the delivery of affordable housing on developments of more than ten dwellings, having regard to national policy requirements.
- 102 No indication of what *"high quality affordable housing"* comprises, or who will judge this and on what basis, is provided. Further, the Neighbourhood Plan does not envisage any particularly large development sites, presenting uncertainty in respect of how affordable housing might be appropriately *"scattered throughout"* all developments. Similarly, there is no evidence to demonstrate that it would be viable, or even appropriate, to develop all affordable housing as *"individual units scattered throughout"* development, or to meet Lifetime Homes Standards. In the absence of such information, it is not clear how Policy H7 has regard to Paragraph 173 of the Framework.
- 103 It is also unclear how Policy H7's *"local connection"* requirement would work in practice. The Policy states that *"where possible"* affordable housing will be allocated to households with a local connection. No indication of what *"where possible"* means is set out and there is no information in respect of how long new affordable housing will be held for a local connection, what will happen if such provision is not *"possible,"* or why reserving all affordable housing for people with local a connection is sustainable. The Policy goes on to refer to eligible households being *"found."* No indication is provided of how such households will be *"found,"* who will do this, and on what basis.
- 104 Policy H7 is imprecise and does not meet the basic conditions.
- 105 I recommend:
- **Re-word Policy H7 *"40% of all new housing development on sites for more than ten dwellings, or on sites of more than 1,000 square metres, should comprise affordable housing. The achievement of Lifetime Homes Standards for affordable housing will be supported, as will the provision of affordable homes for people with a local connection."***

- **Add a *“Community Action. The Parish Council will seek to work with third parties with the aim of encouraging affordable housing to be provided to people with a local connection.”***
- **Delete the Para of supporting text above Policy H7 on page 33**



Design and the Built Environment

**Policy DBE1: Design**

- 106 Good design is recognised by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) as comprising:

*"a key aspect of sustainable development...indivisible from good planning."*  
(Paragraph 56)

- 107 In addition, national policy requires good design to contribute positively to making places better for people (Chapter 7, The Framework). Paragraph 58 of the Framework goes on to require development to:

*"...respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;"*

- 108 Further to the above, Core Strategy Policy CS11 ("*Promoting Design and Built Heritage*") promotes high standards of design in all development.

- 109 In general terms, Policy DBE1 seeks to encourage good design, has regard to national policy and is in general conformity with Core Strategy Policy CS11. However, its requirements are onerous, going well beyond those of national or local policy without any justification or evidence to demonstrate viability or deliverability.

- 110 No evidence is provided to demonstrate that it would be viable, or even possible, for all extensions and housing development to enhance local distinctiveness and character. The "*aspect of the surrounding area*" is an imprecise and undefined term and no clarity is provided in terms of what "*visual amenities*" and a "*significant wider landscape view*" are. It is not clear why all development should incorporate a "*diversity of materials*" or why this would necessarily result in good design.

- 111 Further to the above, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I consider that the requirements set out in Policy DBE1 simply won't be relevant to most extensions. Further, it is unclear why good design is limited to extensions and housing development. National and local policy makes no such distinction.

- 112 The car parking requirements set out are not justified by substantive evidence. There is no indication of why a one bedroom flat needs to provide two car parking spaces; or why a four bedroom house needs to provide three car parking spaces. Paragraph 39 of the Framework sets out all of the things that need to be taken into account when setting local parking standards and there is no evidence to demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan has regard to these requirements.
- 113 Whilst sustainable design, construction and drainage are all important factors, the Neighbourhood Plan provides no detail in respect of precisely what should be incorporated, why, on what basis and whether or not it would be viable and appropriate. This is addressed in the recommendations below.
- 114 I recommend:
- ***Policy DBE1, change to “Development should reinforce local distinctiveness and character, with particular regard to prevailing densities, to Great Easton’s rich historical context and to its biodiversity. Enclosure of plots should incorporate native hedging and/or fencing or walling that is appropriate to the rural surroundings of the area. The incorporation of sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including the use of renewable and low carbon technology; and the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems, will be supported.”***



Natural and Historical Environment

**Policy NHE1: Protection of Local Green Spaces**

- 115 Local communities can identify areas of green space of particular importance to them for special protection. Paragraph 76 of the Framework states that:

*“By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.”*

- 116 Consequently, Local Green Space is a restrictive and significant policy designation. The Framework requires the managing of development within Local Green Space to be consistent with policy for Green Belts. A Local Green Space designation therefore provides protection that is comparable to that for Green Belt land.

- 117 National policy establishes that:

*“The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space.”* (Paragraph 77)

- 118 Thus, when identifying Local Green Space, plan-makers should demonstrate that the requirements for its designation are met in full. These requirements are that the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; it is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance; and it is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. Furthermore, identifying Local Green Space must be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.

- 119 Policy NHE1 seeks to designate eight areas of Local Green Space (there is an error in the last sentence of the supporting text, which refers to seven areas). Whilst it is possible to identify the location of each area on Figure 4, this plan is very small. Consequently, it is difficult to make out the individual boundaries. Given the importance of the Local Green Space designation, I make a recommendation in this regard below.

- 120 The Policy text does not quite reflect national policy's protection of Local Green Space, which is made explicit in Paragraph 76 of the Framework and this is also addressed in the recommendations below.

- 121 The supporting text and evidence base, in the form of Appendix 2 (*"Inventory of sites of environmental significance"*) provides evidence to demonstrate that the areas of Local Green Space identified meet the tests set out in the Framework. I establish earlier in this Report that the Neighbourhood Plan has undergone robust consultation.
- 122 An objection to the designation of Brook Lane Paddock as Local Green Space has been received. However, Brook Lane Paddock appears as a predominantly green space and Appendix 2 provides evidence to demonstrate that the site has been identified as being of particular importance to the local community, who consider it demonstrably special for reasons of ecology, history and culture.
- 123 Whilst something that is *"special"* to one person might not be *"special"* to somebody else, this does not alter the fact that neighbourhood planning provides for communities to protect *"green areas of particular importance to them"* (Paragraph 76, the Framework). Thus, whilst the assessment of areas proposed as Local Green Space might have involved subjective opinions, this does not mean that designations fail to meet the basic conditions. Whatever the *"ratings"* applied to each site, the chosen areas of Local Green Space have emerged through a reasonable and open process and have been considered by the community against the relevant tests set out in the Framework. Through the Neighbourhood Plan, they have found to be demonstrably special.
- 124 I note that there is no requirement for Local Green Space to be accessible and there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that the designations, either individually, or together, are not consistent with the local planning of sustainable development.
- 125 Also in objection to the designation of Brook Lane Paddock, it is suggested by an objector that it is *"...a concern that...the process has not been independent or impartial."* In addition to all of the above, I establish earlier in this Report that the Neighbourhood Plan has emerged through robust public consultation and note that it is the end-result of the significant commitment of voluntary time and sustained effort by many members of the local community.
- 126 The list of areas of Local Green Space in Policy NHE1 includes various shorthand references leading it to appear unnecessarily confusing. Further, the reference numbers make little sense.

127 Taking all of the above into account, I recommend:

- **Policy NHE1, change wording to “*The following sites are designated as Local Green Space, where development is ruled out other than in exceptional circumstances: Holt View (Map Ref 1); Rectory Farm Paddock (Map Ref 2); Church Bank Verges and Greens (Map Ref 3); Brook Lane Paddock (Map Ref 4); Barnsdale Paddock (Map Ref 5); Independent Chapel (Map Ref 6); Deepdale (Map Ref 7); Village Brook Valley (Map Ref 8).*”**
- **Provide new plans underneath the Policy, clearly identifying each Local Green Space’s precise boundaries on a plan which is reasonably large and has an easy to read scale, such that there can be no confusion in respect of boundaries**
- **Change mistake in supporting text on page 42 to “...*eight* key sites...”**

**Policy NHE 2: Protection of Other Sites of Natural or Historical Significance**

128 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a Community Action, whereby the Parish Council will seek to work with third parties with the aim of protecting areas of open space identified through the plan-making process.

129 Policy NHE2 identifies sites of natural or historical significance and requires development to protect or enhance their identified features. However, identified features are not included in Appendix 4, as stated by the Policy. Appendix 2 provides a summary description of a disparate range of features and it is not clear how development can protect or enhance these in all circumstances, or whether it would be viable or even possible to do so.

130 The Policy is imprecise. It does not provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal.

131 In making the recommendation below, I note that SSSI's and other protected sites, are already afforded appropriate protection.

132 I recommend:

- **Delete Policy NHE2**
- **Create new *“Community Action NHE2 – Other Sites of Natural or Historical Significance: The Parish Council will actively work with third parties to seek to secure the protection of the sites shown below in Figure 6.”***

**Policy NHE3: Ridge and Furrow Fields**

133 Policy NHE3 states that development that would harm ridge and furrow fields, recognised as being a distinctive part of the Neighbourhood Area, will be "*strongly resisted*." No indication of what "*strongly resisted*" means, or how strong resistance will be applied is provided. As set out, the Policy is imprecise and fails to provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal.

134 I recommend:

- **Re-word Policy NHE3 "*Development should not result in harm to surviving areas of ridge and furrow fields, identified on the map below.*"**
- **Create new "*Community Action: Ridge and Furrow Fields. The Parish Council will strongly resist development proposals that adversely affect or damage an identified surviving area of ridge and furrow earthworks (see map below).*"**

**Policy NHE4: Important Trees and Hedges**

- 135 Paragraph 109 of the Framework seeks to ensure that planning contributes to halting the overall decline in biodiversity. Generally, Policy NHE4, by protecting woodland and hedgerows, has regard to this.
- 136 However, the Policy contradicts itself, by supporting the replacement of trees it seeks to protect. Further, it is not entirely clear on what basis hedgerows would be protected as heritage assets, due to a lack of substantive evidence in the Neighbourhood Plan or its supporting information. Notwithstanding this, the protection of species-rich hedgerows has regard to the national policy aim of conserving the natural environment, as set out in Chapter 11 of the Framework.
- 137 It is not clear what the land use planning purpose of a survey that *“establishes the health and longevity of affected trees”* is, or what would happen if the survey did not, or could not, do this. This part of Policy NHE4 is imprecise.
- 138 Taking the above into account, I recommend:
- **Policy NHE4, change to “...amenity value *will not be supported*. Development that harms the areas of species-rich hedgerows identified in the map below will not be supported.” (delete rest of Policy)**



**Policy NHE5: Biodiversity**

139 As above, national policy affords protection to biodiversity. In so doing, the Framework is explicit in its requirement for:

*"...net gains in biodiversity where possible..."* (Paragraph 109)

140 In general terms, Policy NHE5 has regard to this, although areas protected by relevant legislation are, by their very nature, protected by legislation.

141 The final part of the Policy refers to the encouragement of projects. This is not a land use planning matter controlled by the Neighbourhood Plan.

142 I recommend:

- **Policy NHE5, change to "...local habitats and species *and where possible and viable, to create new habitats for wildlife.*" (delete rest of Policy)**
- **Create new "*Community Action: Biodiversity. The Parish Council will encourage projects for enhancing riparian habitats around the main watercourses of the River Welland, Eye Brook and Great Easton Brook.*"**

**Policy NHE6: Protection of Views of Landscape and Community Value**

- 143 Policy NHE6 seeks to “*strongly resist*” development that impacts on named views “*in any way.*”
- 144 Policy NHE6 is an imprecise Policy. Notwithstanding earlier comments re: “*strongly resist*” it is unclear why development that might have a positive impact on views would not be supported. More fundamentally, the named “*views*” are vague, comprising shading on a plan and short, wide-ranging descriptions. They lack precision and without evidence to the contrary, they may change on an annual, seasonal or event hourly basis. In addition, there is nothing to demonstrate that the protection of views, as set out, has regard to national policy or is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan.
- 145 Policy NE5 could serve to place a major hurdle in the way of sustainable development coming forward. It lacks justification in the form of relevant detail. It does not provide a decision maker with a clear indication of how to react to a development proposal, having regard to Paragraph 154 of the Framework and does not meet the basic conditions.
- 146 I recommend:
- **Delete Policy NHE6**
  - **Delete supporting text on page 51 and 52**
  - **Delete Figure 9**



**Policy NHE7: Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways**

147 Paragraph 75 of the Framework states that:

*“Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.”*

148 The first part of Policy NHE7 has regard to this.

149 Paragraph 204 of the Framework states that:

150 *“Planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests: necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”*

151 The second part of Policy NHE7 fails to have regard to national policy.

152 I recommend:

- **Policy NHE7, delete second sentence**
- **Add to end of Community Action NHE5 *“The Parish Council will, where possible, seek developer contributions to provide for improvements and extensions to public rights of way.”***

**Policy NHE8: Sustainable Development**

153 Policy NHE8 attempts to set out an all-encompassing Policy. Unfortunately, this fails to provide for the balanced consideration of harm and benefits and so runs the considerable risk of failing to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development – the very thing the Policy aspires to do.

154 In making the recommendation below, I note that other parts of the Neighbourhood Plan promote sustainable development and protect local character and amenity. In this respect, much of the content of Policy NHE8 comprises unnecessary repetition.

155 I recommend:

- **Delete Policy NHE8 and supporting text on page 54**

**Policy NHE9: Rivers and Flooding**

- 156 Policy NHE9 is confusing. It begins by stating that policies not within the Neighbourhood Plan will apply, which is unnecessary. It then goes on to suggest that development in Flood Zone 3 will not need to take flood risk into account if mitigation measures are applied.
- 157 It goes on to require all development to demonstrate lifetime safety, without any justification or reference to national or local policy. It refers to "*all current flood risk management plans*" without identifying what these might be and requires all development to include sustainable urban drainage systems, regardless of relevance, appropriateness or viability.
- 158 No indication is provided of what an "*assessment of potential impacts on water bodies*" might comprise, who will judge it, on what basis, or why this is necessary in all cases, or why all development must demonstrate foul sewerage capacity, regardless of what kind of development is proposed.
- 159 The Policy is imprecise and fails to have regard to national policy. It detracts from the protection afforded by national and local planning policy.
- 160 I recommend:
- **Delete Policy NHE9**
  - **Supporting text, page 57, delete last sentence**

Employment

**Policy E1: Support for Existing Employment Opportunities**

- 161 Policy E1 seeks to support local employment by protecting employment uses. This has regard to Chapter 3 of the Framework, which supports economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity.
- 162 However, as worded, the Policy would require a commercial site to remain inactive for at least twelve months, in clear conflict with the aims of Chapter 3 of the Framework and contrary to Paragraph 17 of that document, which recognises the need to “*proactively drive and support*” sustainable economic development as a core planning principle.
- 163 Part of the supporting text reads as though it comprises a Policy, which it does not and this is addressed in the recommendations below
- 164 I recommend:
- **Policy E1, change to “...does not provide employment opportunities *will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the commercial premises or land in question has no...six months.*”**
  - **Supporting text, page 59, change last Para to “...To do so, *the Parish Council considers it necessary to seek to restrict...purposes such that, only if it is clearly...purposes should this be allowed.*”**
  - **Supporting text page 60, first line, change to “...or land *can be...uses, it should be demonstrated that there is little...in the future. The marketing campaign referred to in the Policy below will be expected to demonstrate that all reasonable...credible party.*”**

**Policy E2: Support for new employment activities**

165 Whilst the general intent of Policy E2 has regard to Chapter 3 of the Framework, referred to above, its opening sentence is confusingly worded, such that it could be taken to apply to all forms of development, which makes little sense. As such, the Policy is imprecise and fails to reflect the positive, supportive intent set out in the supporting text.

166 For clarity, I recommend:

- **Policy E2, change opening sentence to “*New employment-generating development will be supported where it: a) Falls..; b) Re-uses land or buildings wherever possible; c) Is..; d) Does not..; e) Does not..; f) Does not..; g) Contributes...; h) Is well...Limits to Development.*”**

**Policy E3: Re-Use of Agricultural and Commercial Buildings**

- 167 Paragraph 28 of the Framework supports the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Furthermore, Core Strategy Policy CS7 (*"Enabling Employment and Business Development"*) encourages farm diversification.
- 168 Policy E3 promotes sustainable employment development in the countryside. In so doing, it has regard to national policy and is in general conformity with the Core Strategy.
- 169 As set out, Criteria c) and e) of the Policy do not allow for a balanced consideration of a development proposal, such that the benefits might outweigh the harm arising. This could prevent the Policy from contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and is addressed in the recommendations below:
- **Policy E3, change to "...c)...not result in unacceptable harm in respect of any....e) There is no unacceptable harm to neighbours..."**



**E4: Broadband Infrastructure**

- 170 Policy E4 is a positive land use planning policy that supports the provision of high quality communications infrastructure.
- 171 The Policy has regard to Paragraph 42 of the Framework, which recognises that:
- 172 *“Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.”*
- 173 No changes recommended.

**Policy E5: Working from Home**

174 Policy E5 promotes appropriate extensions and small scale development for commercial and light industrial uses. This has regard to Paragraph 21 of the Framework, which supports flexible working practices.

175 Whilst Policy E5 seeks to provide for good design, it limits the protection of residential amenity to “*nuisance*.” This runs the risk of failing to have regard to Paragraph 56 of the Framework, which requires development to contribute positively to making places better for people.

176 I recommend:

- **Policy E5, change to “...a) *There is no significant adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, having regard to matters including noise and disturbance, fumes, odour, outlook and privacy.*”**

Community Facilities and Amenities

**Policy CF1: Protection of Community Facilities and Amenities**

177 Chapter 8 of the Framework, "*Promoting healthy communities,*" recognises the important role that planning can play in facilitating the creation of healthy, inclusive communities. In so doing, it requires planning policies to:

*"guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services...ensure that established shops, facilities and services are retained for the benefit of the community"* (Paragraph 70)

178 Policy CF1 affords protection to important local facilities. It has regard to national planning policy and meets the basic conditions.

179 No changes recommended.

**Policy CF2: Provision of New Community Facilities**

180 Community Action CF1: Community Assets sets out the aim of the Parish Council to register the Village Shop as an Asset of Community Value. In this way, the Neighbourhood Plan promotes an action aimed at providing a key local facility with additional protection under the Localism Act (2011). Further Community Actions seek to provide new allotments and facilities for young people, to the benefit of the local community.

181 Policy CF2 is concerned with the provision of new community facilities. Again, this has regard to Chapter 8 of the Framework, referred to above.

182 Rather than specifically support the provision of new community facilities however, the wording of the Policy could have unforeseen circumstances, such that potentially supports any form of development, so long as it diversifies or enhances community facilities. Exaggerating for the purpose of emphasis, this could lend support for an application to develop say, a new super-prison that also provided a new shop for the village.

183 I recommend:

- **Policy CF2, change to “*The diversification or enhancement of Great Easton’s range of community facilities will...*”**

Transport and Access

**Policy T1: Traffic Management**

- 184 Policy T1 supports the creation of Village Gateways, with the aim of providing for highway safety.
- 185 This is a positive, supportive land use planning policy which has regard to Paragraph 58 of the Framework, which amongst other things, seeks to create safe environments with a strong sense of place.
- 186 No changes are recommended.

**Policy T2: Road Safety**

187 Policy T2 is not a land use planning policy, but sets out a commitment to investigate something. Part of the supporting text reads as though it comprises a Policy, which it does not.

188 I acknowledge that parking around the school is of significant local concern and recommend:

- **Delete Policy T2**
- **Replace with *“Community Action T1: Road Safety. The Parish Council will investigate the provision of off-street parking in the vicinity of Bringhurst Primary School.”***
- **Delete last line of supporting text to Policy “Proposals to...will be supported.”**



**Policy T3: Footpaths and Cycle Paths**

189 Chapter 4 of the Framework, "*Promoting sustainable transport,*" supports sustainable patterns of movement. In addition, Paragraph 75 of the Framework states:

*"Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access."*

190 Policy T3 seeks to protect and enhance public rights of way. It meets the basic conditions.

191 No changes recommended.

## **7. The Neighbourhood Plan: Other Matters**

192 Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan benefits from the clear communication and monitoring strategy set out, it cannot impose a monitoring requirement on the Local Authority.

193 I recommend:

- **Page 78, change to “...will be regularly *monitored* by *Great Easton Parish Council*. *The policies and measures...*”**

194 The recommendations made in this Report will have a subsequent impact on Policy, page, plan and paragraph numbering.

195 I recommend:

- **Update the Policy, page, plan and paragraph numbering, taking account of the recommendations contained in this Report.**

## **8. Summary**

196 Having regard to all of the above, a number of modifications are recommended in order to enable the Neighbourhood Plan to meet the basic conditions.

197 Subject to these modifications, I confirm that:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union (EU) obligations; and
- the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

198 Taking the above into account, I find that the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions. I have already noted above that the Plan meets paragraph 8(1) requirements.

## **9. Referendum**

199 I recommend to Harborough District Council that, subject to the modifications proposed, **the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a Referendum.**

### Referendum Area

200 I am required to consider whether the Referendum Area should be extended beyond the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area.

201 I consider the Neighbourhood Area to be appropriate and there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that this is not the case.

202 Consequently, I recommend that the Plan should proceed to a Referendum based on the Great Easton Neighbourhood Area approved by Harborough District Council on 13 January 2015.

**Nigel McGurk, June 2017**  
**Erimax – Land, Planning and Communities**

**ERIMAX**

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