

# GREAT EASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## GREAT EASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



**2017 - 2031**

**REFERENDUM VERSION**

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## **Introduction from the Chairmen of the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee and Great Easton Parish Council**

In late 2014, the Parish Council of Great Easton decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Although situated just outside the Parish boundary, Bringhurst Primary School was included in the designated area of the Neighbourhood Plan. This reflected the importance to the community of the local School and was endorsed by Bringhurst, Drayton & Nevill Holt Parish Meeting.

The Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee was established to prepare a Plan that would deliver the long term goals of a balanced and vibrant neighbourhood.

Since becoming established, we have held many public meetings, both general open events and specific discussions with groups of, for example, school children and older people; prepared a village questionnaire to seek the views of local residents and other stakeholders (including landowners), groups and businesses who share an interest in Great Easton.

In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan we have listened very carefully to all the feedback received through all of these consultations and have worked hard to ensure that the Plan incorporates and reflects the views of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared alongside the development of Harborough District Council's draft Local Plan which is now due to be Adopted in 2018.

This is the Referendum Version of the Neighbourhood Plan for Great Easton. This means that the Neighbourhood Plan has passed Examination and is ready to be put to the community in a referendum.

A list of the appendices referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan is set out on Page 79 and copies of the appendices will be maintained on the Parish website –[www.greateaston.org](http://www.greateaston.org)

We are grateful to Officers at Harborough District Council, District Councillors and the wider community for their involvement in the

development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Great Easton is an attractive and popular place in which to live and the contribution from people who care about their community and want to make it better for generations to come is greatly appreciated.

*Roger Bowder*

Chairman

Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee

*Phil Long*

Chairman

Great Easton Parish Council

July 2017

# 1. Why Neighbourhood Plans are important

A neighbourhood plan is an opportunity for local people to create a framework for delivering a sustainable future for the benefit of all who live, work or visit the area.

The right for communities to prepare neighbourhood plans was established by the Localism Act 2011 and the rules governing their preparation were published in 2012. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a neighbourhood plan gives the community *“direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need”* (NPPF para 183). The Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan will ensure the community gets the right types of development in the right locations and set planning policies and community actions in areas related to housing, the environment, community facilities and transport. These will be used in determining decisions on planning applications across Great Easton.

A neighbourhood plan is part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and this statutory status gives it far more weight than other local documents such as parish plans or village design statements. But a neighbourhood plan must also be compatible with European legislation, have regard for national policies and be in general conformity with existing local strategic planning policy. Whilst every effort has been made to make the main body of this Neighbourhood Plan easy to read and understand, the wording of the actual policies is necessarily more formal so that it follows these statutory requirements, known as ‘basic conditions’.

Robust evidence is the foundation on which a neighbourhood plan has to be based. This includes evidence of community engagement and consultation and how the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people have been taken into account alongside stakeholder comment and statistical information to justify the policies contained within the

neighbourhood plan.

## **2. Why we need a neighbourhood plan in Great Easton**

The Parish Council is very keen to promote Great Easton and to take the decisions locally that will serve the best interests of the community in the years to come.

There is recognition that sustainable development is not only necessary but desirable, as without it our community will stagnate, but we want to influence and direct the shape and nature of the development and where within our neighbourhood plan area it takes place.

A neighbourhood plan cannot be used to prevent development and we have been very clear from the outset that Great Easton embraces new development but wishes to control it in the interests of the local community. Having a Neighbourhood Plan gives us the opportunity to identify the best ways to deliver development, directing it towards what the local community needs and wants, while protecting our natural environment and cultural assets and ensuring a more sustainable future for ourselves and future generations.

The Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by members of the community with these goals in mind. We have embraced the NPPF's core principle of "a presumption in favour of sustainable development" and have approached our task as a "creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives" (NPPF para 17).

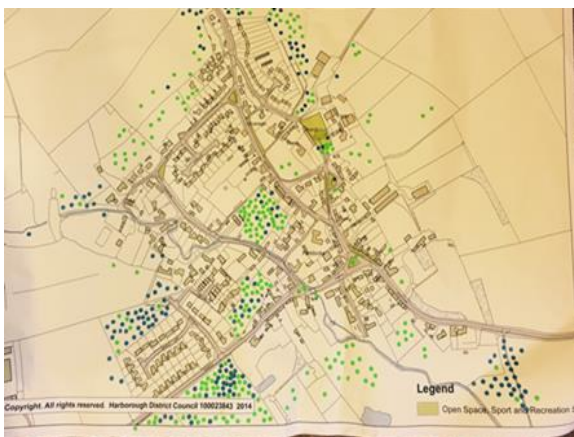
## **3. How the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared**

On 6 October 2014 the Parish Council took the decision to form an Advisory Committee of the Parish Council to drive the process forward. Its mandate was to drive the process, consult with the local community and deliver the Neighbourhood Plan.



Designation of the Great Easton Neighbourhood Plan area was applied for on 14 October 2014. Designation, incorporating Bringhurst Primary School, was approved by Harborough District Council on 13 January 2015.

Letters to a range of statutory and local stakeholders advising them of the decision to undertake a neighbourhood plan were sent out in November 2014 and an Open Event at the Village Hall in November 2014 attracted a high turnout and over 250 individual responses were recorded on a wide range of issues.



The Advisory Committee began regular monthly meetings, commencing in early January 2015 and continuing until the end of the process. Specific 'Theme Groups' were established in spring 2015 to drill down into the detail of the Neighbourhood Plan in subject areas of Community Facilities; Environment and Heritage; Housing and Design and Transport and Employment. These groups met regularly through the remainder of 2015 and into 2016 and organised meetings with professionals and specialists

to help further the work being undertaken.

A questionnaire was developed in conjunction with Midlands Rural Housing incorporating a Housing Needs Survey which was distributed to households across the Parish of Great Easton (The Parish) in spring 2015 and attracted a response rate of about 60%. The results were analysed in a report in September 2015.

Meetings of the Theme Group Chairs were established in the autumn of 2015 to co-ordinate the output of the Theme Groups and to begin the process of pulling together the policies which were to feature in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

A further Open Event was held in November 2015 to report to the local community on progress and to enable the stakeholders to comment on the policy themes being developed.





In June 2016, developers and land owners who had put their land forward for development were invited to present their schemes to representatives of the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee and the Housing Theme Group. This information was assessed alongside an independent site assessment process and preferred sites were selected to meet the minimum housing targets required by Harborough District Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan was developed from these discussions, from all the other consultations and interviews conducted by members of the Neighbourhood Plan team and from research and evidence collected.

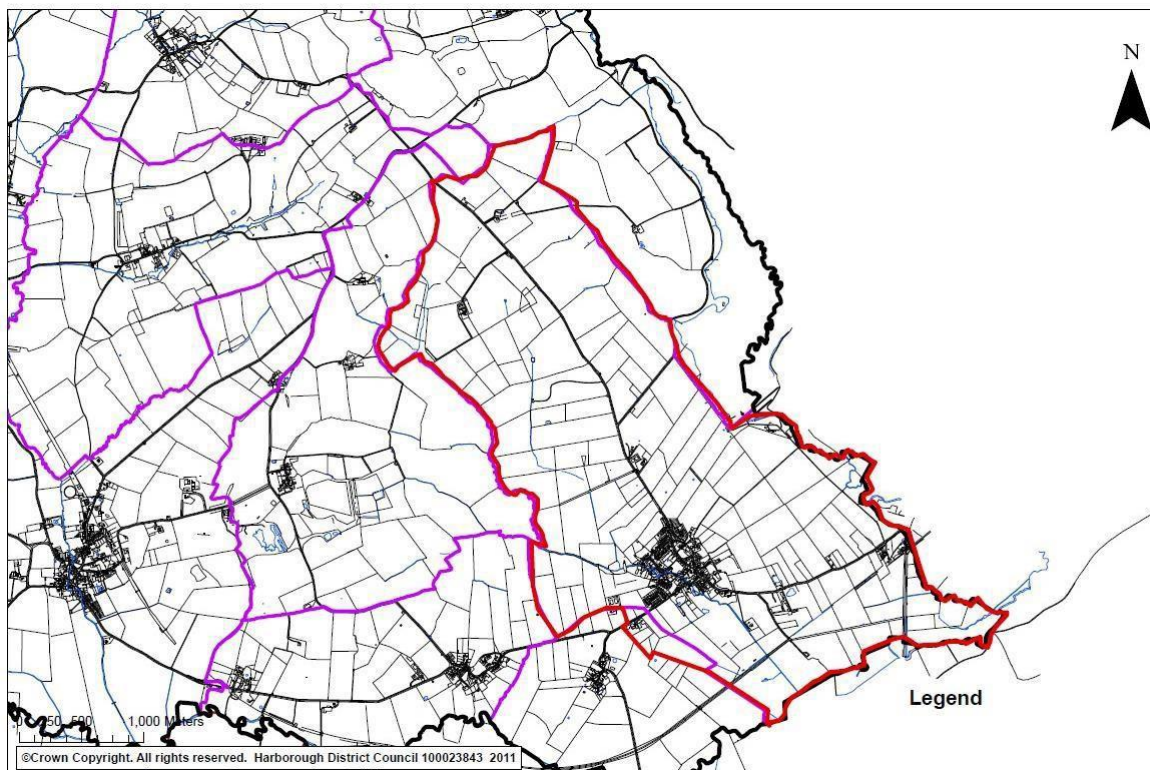
Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan's development we have also liaised with Officers from Harborough District Council to ensure not only that our policies are in general conformity with the existing Local Plan but are also unlikely to conflict with policies being progressed in the emerging Local Plan which is scheduled to be Adopted in 2018.

It is important to note that not having a neighbourhood plan does not mean that development won't happen. Development will still take place, but without the policies in the Plan, which set out the type of development that is in keeping with our area's character, having any effect. Decisions will instead be based on district-wide policies rather than local criteria.

## 4. Our Neighbourhood

The Neighbourhood Plan area comprises the whole of the Parish in the Harborough District within Leicestershire. The scope of the Neighbourhood Plan includes Bringhurst School, as shown in figure 1 (below).

Figure 1 – Parish of Great Easton with Bringhurst School –area designated on 13 January 2015. The purple lines are Parish boundaries. The red line is the Neighbourhood Plan area.



Great Easton is identified as a ‘Selected Rural Village’ in the Harborough District Council Core Strategy. This means that there will be some development, especially housing, but on a small and limited scale.

The Parish (population 671 in 2011) is characterised by a fast growing (up 20% from 2001) and ageing population. Levels of deprivation are well below the district, regional and national averages. The levels of health are good with the proportion of residents who consider that their health is very good being above average.

The levels of economic activity amongst people who live in the Parish are

high and above the national, regional and district averages although there are limited employment opportunities for work in the village. A very high proportion (78%) of residents drive by car to work. The proportion of working age residents (11%) who state they work from home is well above the local and national averages.

The Parish is a popular area in which to live and demand for housing is strong. The housing stock is generally good. The main tenure is owner occupied (84%), and other forms of tenure, especially socially rented, are relatively low. The fit between demand and the available type and tenure of housing is an issue as well as the affordability of existing and new housing.

There has been some house building in the Parish, and further sites have been put forward to the District Council as suitable for development as part of the SHLAA process.

The Parish generally has a good social and community infrastructure, including a primary school adjacent to the Parish boundary, pub, shop and community facilities including a well-used Village Hall.

The area is strategically well located in relation to the national road network and has a number of walking and cycling routes, although they are poorly connected. Public transport is limited and there is a very high dependency on the car for travel purposes.

The built environment is very good. This includes over 40 Listed Buildings and other structures and much of the Parish is in a Conservation Area.

The Parish is set within and surrounded by open countryside, much of which is attractive in nature. It also has a number of important and attractive green spaces, including some of ecological interest.

Water and air quality are generally good, but there are some indications that relative CO2 emissions are linked to the high levels of car usage.

Parts of the Parish are at risk of flooding.

## 5. What we want the Neighbourhood Plan to achieve

Should the Neighbourhood Plan be ‘Made’, it would become part of the Development Plan for the District of Harborough. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan must support the NPPF’s “presumption in favour of sustainable development” and also be in general conformity with the District’s strategic policies. However, if there is a conflict with existing non- strategic policies in the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan policies will take precedence. This is the first time that communities have had the opportunity to create planning policies with this degree of statutory weight.

Once the Neighbourhood Plan has been ‘Made’, when a planning application is submitted to Harborough District Council, the Planning Officers, and ultimately the Planning Committee, will be required to refer to the Neighbourhood Plan (alongside the District’s own Local Plan) and check whether the proposed development is in keeping with the policies the community has developed.

There are some restrictions on what neighbourhood plans can achieve. For example:

- They cannot promote less development than is set out in the Local Plan.
- They deal essentially with land use issues; they cannot address enforcement issues.
- While issues such as the funding of a bus route do not directly relate to land use issues, neighbourhood plans can encourage funding for these through developer contributions

It is the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan to set out policies for the years up to 2031 that will ensure that our area develops and grows in a way that is

sustainable economically, socially and environmentally, and which enhances and improves the community in which we live.

The main aims of the Neighbourhood Plan were considered by the Advisory Committee at the commencement of the neighbourhood planning process taking into account the views expressed by the community at the Open Event and are as follows:

### Vision for Great Easton

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that Great Easton 1) is a tranquil and safe place to live; 2) continues to thrive as a vibrant and distinct village with a balanced and diverse community; 3) will evolve and expand whilst retaining its unique and distinctive character and 4) provides wellbeing through a healthy, creative, equitable and sustainable life.

Great Easton will be known for its strong community, its school, attractive streets and green spaces and thriving natural environment. It will be safe and enjoyable to move around on foot and bike, thus promoting a safe, family focused and invigorating environment for future growth.

This will be achieved by:

1. Supporting measured, proportionate, timely and sustainable development, in a gradually phased manner. These developments will be eco-friendly in both design and operation. They will also recognise the village character, being built to be sympathetic with the predominant ironstone and red brick, be well spaced and conform to local need both from an employment and demographic perspective.
2. Maintaining the high quality natural environment with protected wildlife interests, recognising the local agricultural predominance.
3. Retaining and enhancing the character and appeal of the existing conservation area and unique assets of the Parish, including footpaths, jitties, open green spaces and community and recreational facilities.



4. Endorsing and/or developing policies and developments that have a positive effect on the sustainability and environment of the Parish, including those that remove or minimise flood risk, mitigate climate change and reduce the village carbon foot–print
5. Enhancing and supporting our rural economy through ensuring efficient and timely public transport to neighbouring centres and providing an environment for local businesses and home working to flourish in a modern digital age.
6. Endorsing policies that ensure any potential increase in traffic volume is kept within safe and efficient parameters and concurrently does not compromise the safety or alter the feel of the village

## 6. Meeting the requirement for sustainable development

The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, all of which are important and interrelated.

### a) Social

In evaluating locations that are most suitable for housing development, we have given preference to those that are:

- Brownfield sites or previously developed land within the village envelope;
- On roads or streets that allow safe road access or where safe road access can be achieved through improvements;
- Within easy access to community facilities and accessible green open space.

We are also seeking to deliver a mix of housing types so that we can meet the needs of present and future generations and ensure we support the community's needs and its health, social and cultural wellbeing.

In addition, we are seeking to preserve and develop the community facilities within the Parish based on the outcomes of an extensive range of community consultation events in order to help the sustainability of the Parish and to enhance community cohesion.

### b) Environment

In order to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, we are seeking to ensure that:

- Housing development is of the right type in the right location, so that it does not harm but instead positively reflects the existing and

historic character of the area and has regard for the high level of statutorily listed buildings in the Parish.

- The open spaces within our village are protected from development, to protect the village identity and retain the rural nature of its surroundings;
- Development preserves and contributes to the attractive local countryside;
- Development recognises the need to protect and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats;
- Provision is made for improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

#### c) Economy

Whilst the community is largely residential, there is a strong desire in the community to safeguard its retail and employment outlets, including the farming community. We therefore wish to retain at least the current level of employment, and develop it further where possible, in our area by:

- Retaining our existing sites which provide jobs for continued use and where possible improving them, unless it can be clearly proven that they are not viable;
- Supporting diversification of existing businesses where necessary;
- Encouraging start-up businesses.

We also wish to ensure the future viability and vitality of Great Easton by retaining and enhancing the range of community facilities available within the Parish.

This document sets out local considerations for delivering sustainable development across the Parish. Development proposals should meet the requirements of all relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and be in line with Harborough District Council and national policies.

# Neighbourhood Plan Policies

## 7. A Sustainable Great Easton

### Introduction

The purpose of the UK Planning System as set out in the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development.

This means ensuring that providing for the needs of the current generation does not make life worse for future generations.

This Neighbourhood Plan has the need to secure sustainable development at its heart. This includes how much new development is required to meet the needs of the local community, where it should best go and how it should be designed, both for now and in the future. This encompasses all proposals for development which require planning approval from the very smallest, such as an extension to a house, to larger housing developments and employment proposals.

The Parish Council will take a positive approach to the consideration of development proposals that contribute to sustainable development. This includes working with Harborough District Council, Leicestershire County Council, the local community, developers and other stakeholders to encourage the formulation of development proposals, which clearly demonstrate how sustainable development has been considered and addressed, and can be approved without delay.

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.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not intended to replace the policies contained in the Harborough District Council Core Strategy and the NPPF. It sits alongside these documents, to add more detailed Great Easton-specific

policies and help achieve the community's vision. Where suitable policies already exist in the Harborough District Council Core Strategy or NPPF, they are not duplicated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Limits to Development**

The purpose of Limits to Development is to ensure that sufficient sites for new homes and economic activity are available in appropriate locations that will avoid impinging into the local countryside.

Limits to Development have been defined by Harborough District Council in the Adopted Core Strategy for Villages such as Great Easton who are seen as suitable settlements for development. The Core Strategy makes it clear that such a measure is important to clarify where new development activity is best located. Focusing development within Limits to Development reflects the Core Strategy's objective of focusing development in the most sustainable locations.

The Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the village of Great Easton. This will update and supersede the existing Limits to Development currently used by Harborough District Council, as it takes into account the housing allocations that are being made through the Plan.

Within the defined Limits to Development an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle, although some sites within this area are protected from development.

Focusing development within the agreed Limits to Development will help to support existing services within the village centre and help to protect the countryside and the remainder of the Plan area from inappropriate development.

### Methodology

The updated Limits to Development have been determined using the following criteria:

- a) Existing commitments by virtue of an extant planning permission

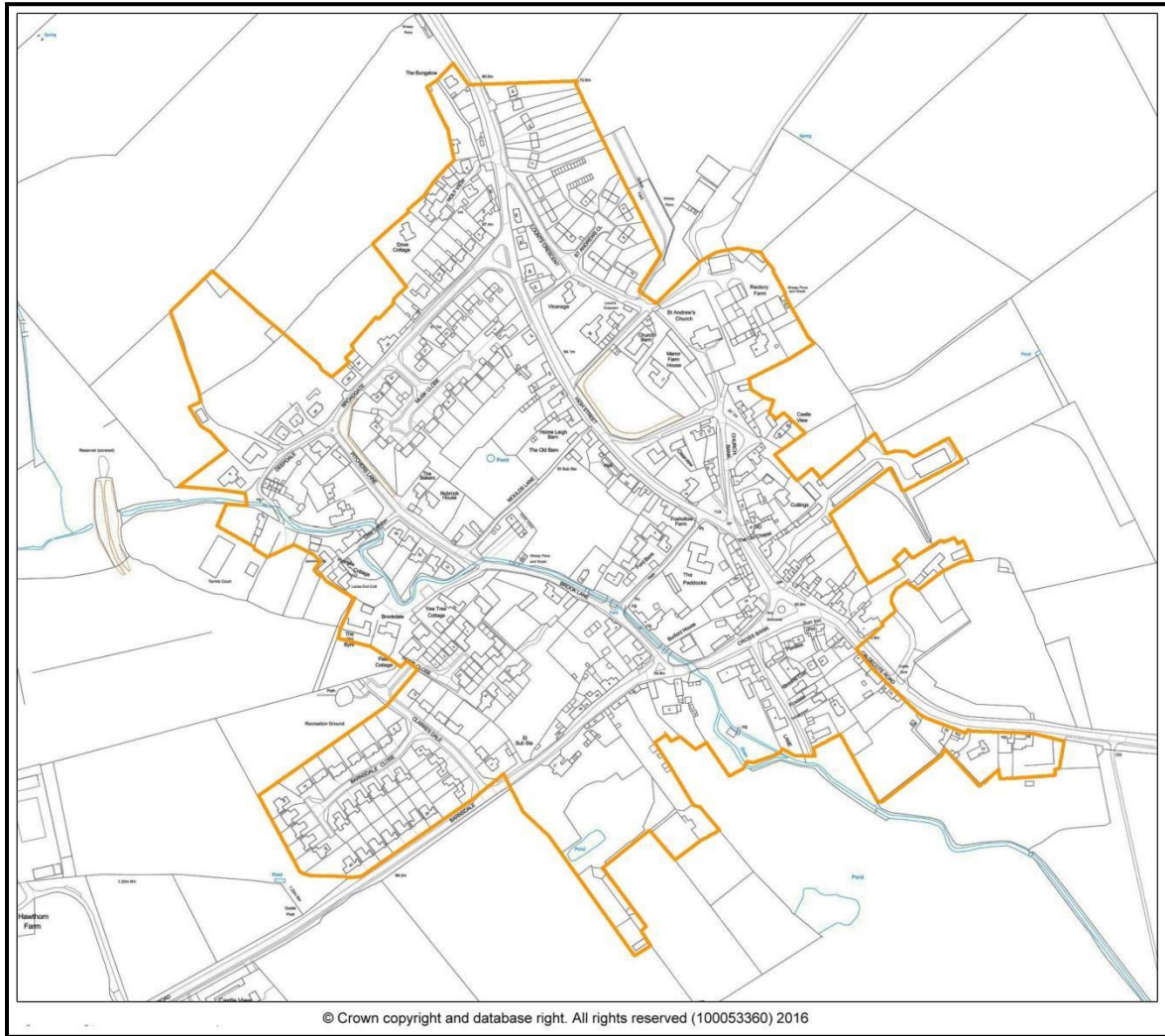


for residential development on the fringes of the settlement have been incorporated;

b) Residential allocations through the Plan have been taken into account;

c) Clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows and roads have been followed.

**Figure 2.1: Limits to Development**



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**POLICY SD1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT** – Development proposals within the Plan area will be supported on sites within the Limits to Development as identified in Figure 2 (above) where it complies with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan and subject to design and amenity considerations

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## 8. Housing

### Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan area comprises the core village of Great Easton (“the village”) where the bulk of the community's housing is situated, with a small number of houses around the waterworks cottages near to Caldecott, the Easton Square development of four houses off Caldecott Road, with the remainder being farm houses and associated cottages scattered through the Parish.

The housing stock comprises 278 dwellings, primarily located within the village. It is in this area that the housing policies of the Neighbourhood plan will largely be concentrated.

The housing stock within the village comprises 48 one or two bedroom houses, 97 three bedroom houses 82 four bedroom houses and 51 five or more bedroom houses. Of these, 187 are detached houses, with 76 being semi-detached and 15 being terraced. 196 homes are in owner occupation. 14 are classed as affordable housing and 25 are privately rented.

The street plan of the village dates to mediaeval times and there is a significant number of older properties, some of which have 16th century origins. Additional housing, either infill or replacing unsuitable housing, was provided through the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries.

The village remained largely unplanned until the development of the Barnsdale/Clarkesdale/Barnsdale Close development in the 1960s. This expanded the village envelope and its design took no account of the vernacular housing nearby.

In the late 1970s, additional housing, this time within the village envelope, was developed at Musk Close/Broadgate. Again, no attempt was made to design the development to be in keeping with the village vernacular.

Subsequent smaller infill developments at Holt View, Brookdale and Ford

Bank did, in the last two cases use local materials.

All of these developments, from Clarksdale on, were commercially-led and did not provide for affordable housing. A subsequent development, Home Close (2008–9) made the first provision of affordable housing since the council houses were built after the Second World War. Home Close comprises 17 dwellings, of which 5 are shared ownership

### **Housing Provision**

It is recognised that the provision of new housing helps to support existing community facilities such as the shop and the pub and helps to achieve the aim of supporting the balance and sustainability of the community.

Consultation has shown that residents are not opposed to development, but are concerned that house building is not disproportionate, meets the identified needs of the village and that where it takes place it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the Parish.

The Harborough District Council Settlement Profile for Great Easton (2015) sees an opportunity for new housing to meet the needs of an ageing population and to improve the mix of housing given the high levels of detached dwellings in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

The emerging Local Plan for Harborough District Council is updating the housing need across the District and the allocation of housing within it. The Executive Report on the preferred Housing Distribution Option (September 2016) states that there is a requirement to provide for at least 11,000 new dwellings between 2011 and 2031 across the District. Of this, nearly two thirds of the dwellings needed over the Neighbourhood Plan period have already been built or planned for.

The draft Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for development.

On the basis of this hierarchy, Great Easton (as well as 15 other

settlements) is identified as a Selected Rural Village. These are identified on the basis of the presence of at least 2 of the 6 key services (food shop, GP surgery, library, post office, primary school and pub) together with a scheduled bus service. Development in Selected Rural Villages should be *‘primarily in the form of small-scale infill developments or limited extensions to help address economic, social or community objectives. This could include schemes to enable more social housing, small-scale market housing and development aimed at meeting the needs of local people’*. (Draft Local Plan consultation, Harborough District Council, 2015)

Although the emerging Local Plan is yet to be finalised, the latest minimum target for Great Easton is for the Parish to provide an additional 35 residential dwellings up to 2031.

This target is a residual target, meaning existing housing commitments which have gained planning permission before 31 March 2016, but which have not yet been built, have already been taken into account and do not form part of Great Easton’s housing requirement.

### **Housing Allocations**

During 2015 Harborough District Council, along with all other districts in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area, undertook a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Following a call for landowners to identify sites with potential for house building, land in and around Great Easton was put forward that could accommodate some 160 new houses. The suitability of these sites was not tested in compiling the SHLAA and some were in areas that had been identified as being at risk of flooding, so would be unlikely ever to be developed.

In developing the Neighbourhood Plan and looking out for suitable land to allocate for development, all land owners holding sites in and around the village were identified, through the SHLAA information and the Land Registry. All were notified of the Neighbourhood Plan process and invited to enter into dialogue with the Housing Theme Group developing the

Housing Chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan. Some landowners attended the open day held in Great Easton village hall in November 2015 and had the opportunity for dialogue with those working on the housing policy. Those landowners who were interested in submitting sites for consideration did so as part of this process.

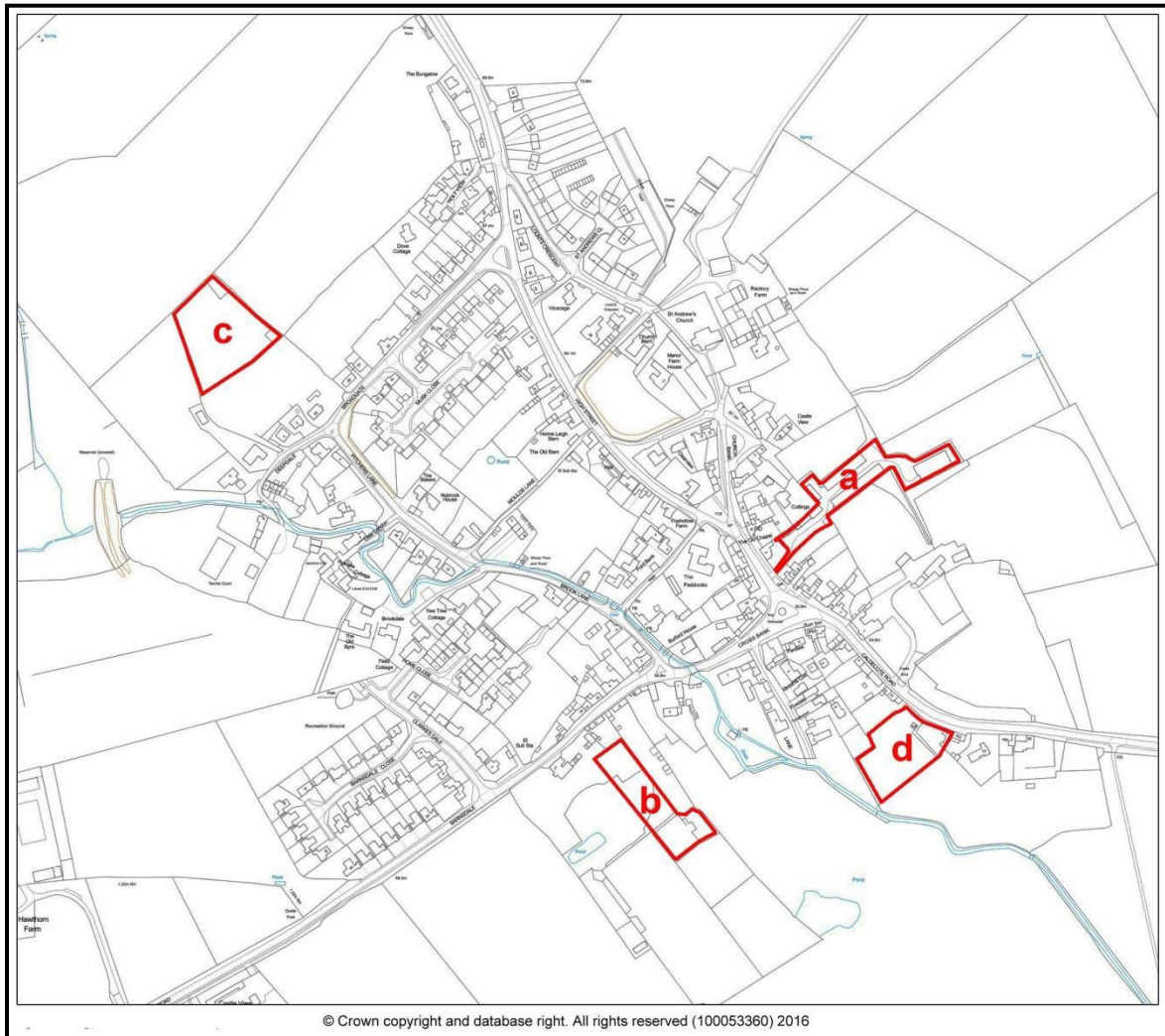
As the development of the Neighbourhood Plan progressed, a number of new proposals for housing emerged. These were the subject of an independent sustainability assessment, which helped to inform the choice of options put forward. In order to inform better the choice to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, prospective developers were invited to present their ideas to members of the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee and the Housing Theme Group, at a day where the public was invited to observe. The proposals included in the Neighbourhood Plan are, therefore, informed by the housing needs survey, the independent assessment and the developers' presentations at the open event.

Additional information concerning the housing site selection process is at Appendix 12.

The numbers of houses allocated for Great Easton have been identified through the joint Parish and District Council Housing Needs survey, Harborough District Council's emerging Local Plan and the availability of potential sites, taking into account permissions and commitments arising after the initiation of the Neighbourhood Plan process.



Figure 2.2: Housing allocations



**KEY: Housing allocations:**

- a) Land to rear of 2 High Street – formerly chickensheds
- b) Barnsdale
- c) Land to rear of 28 Broadgate
- d) Land to rear of 14–18 Caldecott Road

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**POLICY H1: HOUSING ALLOCATION** – Land is allocated for residential development on the following sites (see map Fig 2.2): 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).

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## Windfall development

A number of landowners have indicated that they would be interested in small scale infill development at some point during the currency of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan will allow for these sites, which should be of no greater size than two new homes given the need to maintain the character of the village and to achieve the design standards provided in Policy DBE1.

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**POLICY H2: WINDFALL SITES – Small scale development proposals for infill and redevelopment sites (up to two dwellings) will be supported where:**

- a. It is within the Limits to Development of Great Easton;
  - b. It respects the shape and form of Great Easton in order to maintain its distinctive character and enhance it where possible;
  - c. It retains existing important natural boundaries such as trees, hedges and streams;
  - d. It provides for a safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site; and
  - e. It does not reduce garden space to an extent where it adversely impacts on the character of the area, the amenity of neighbours and the occupiers of the dwellings, or has a significant detrimental heritage or environmental impact.
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## Housing Mix

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes is essential to support sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. In Great Easton, this will underpin a well-balanced population that is vital to the on-going viability of local services and prosperity of the Parish, particularly in light of the community's increasingly ageing population. Evidence from the Census and other data indicates a predominance of detached housing, under-occupied dwellings with 4 or more bedrooms and a limited number of new

build sales over recent years. This suggests a need for smaller homes of three bedrooms or fewer.

The proportion of owned properties in the Parish (either owned outright or with a mortgage) at 84% is higher than the proportion in Harborough District (78%) and in the East Midlands (67%). Levels of social rented accommodation (5.4%) are lower than the district, regional and national levels. There is also a lower than average number of households in the private rented sector at 8%. The level of private rented accommodation in Harborough District is 11.2%, in the East Midlands it is 14.9% and in England 16.8%.

There is a higher than average proportion of people aged 65 and over with 25% of the population in that age bracket, compared with 18.3% across the wider Harborough district.

There are more detached houses than on average across the district, but fewer semi-detached and terraced dwellings than in the wider Harborough district or across the East Midlands.

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**POLICY H3: HOUSING MIX – 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**

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### **Affordable housing**

Council housing was provided in Great Easton in the period following both World Wars where houses were built on Stockerston Lane in the 1920s and on Broadgate and Lounts Crescent in the 1950s. In addition, a further development of 1 bedroom bungalows was built on St Andrew's Close in the 1960s for older, more vulnerable people.

The Right to Buy policy of the 1980s saw the selling off of many of Great

Easton's council houses and now there remain 15 in the public rented sector (local authority or Housing Association). Harborough District Council subsequently transferred its remaining council housing to the Seven Locks Housing Association, which has now been taken over. A consequence of this sequence of events is that there is a limited number of houses available in the village either at the lower end of the market or for rent.

In partnership with Harborough District Council, a housing needs survey was carried out in 2015 which was administered and analysed by Midlands Rural Housing. Surveys were distributed to every household in the Parish and 157 were completed, a return rate of 57%. This identified the following needs over the coming 5 years:

Open Market housing (for local people to purchase)	
2-bed houses	2
4-bed house	1
3-bed bungalow	1
	TOTAL 4
Affordable housing (for local people)	
1-bed house, affordable rented	1
2-bed house, affordable rented	1
3-bed house, affordable rented	1
3-bed house, shared ownership	1
	TOTAL 4
On HDC Housing Needs Register (people with a Great Easton connection)	
1-bed house, affordable rented	1
2-bed house, affordable rented	2
3-bed house, affordable rented	1
4-bed house, affordable rented	1
	TOTAL 5

Key messages from the housing needs survey indicate a need for housing at the lower end of the commercial market, as well as shared ownership or rented affordable houses. The Neighbourhood Plan supports this

approach, as it seeks to maintain the diversity of the village population.

Policy Development proposals will be welcomed that seek to address the shortage in the village of smaller houses to buy, as well as shared ownership/rental properties.

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**POLICY H4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING – 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.**

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**Community Action H1: 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.**

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## 9. Design and the Built Environment

### Design

Great Easton lies on the edge of the ironstone belt. Although properties in the village include a number built of ironstone, there is also a significant number of properties built using a wide variety of materials. Estates such as Clarksdale and Musk Close have been built using generic designs available to developers at the time and do not reflect local materials. Other houses in the village use brick, as well as limestone and render, so there is no overall theme for design in Great Easton and the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to impose one on new developments.

Design should reflect the properties nearby and, if adjacent to open countryside, seek to reduce the visual impact of the new development.

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**POLICY DBE1: DESIGN – 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.**

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### Conservation area

Harborough District Council's character statement for the Great Easton Conservation Area describes the village as being "compact in shape around a rectangle of roads, linked through by jitties (alleyways). In addition there are three roads to adjacent villages with lanes or jitties leading outwards. The Conservation Area embraces all these roads with

the exception of Clarkes Dale, the block of 1960s housing development at the southern entrance to the village”.

The prominent building material is recognised as being of ironstone with roof materials of thatch, or of Collyweston slate, or of Welsh slate. It is also noted that a characteristic is the scattering of farmsteads along the principal roads and the varied walls presenting an interesting feature adding to the village scene and character and being constructed of mud, stone or red brick.

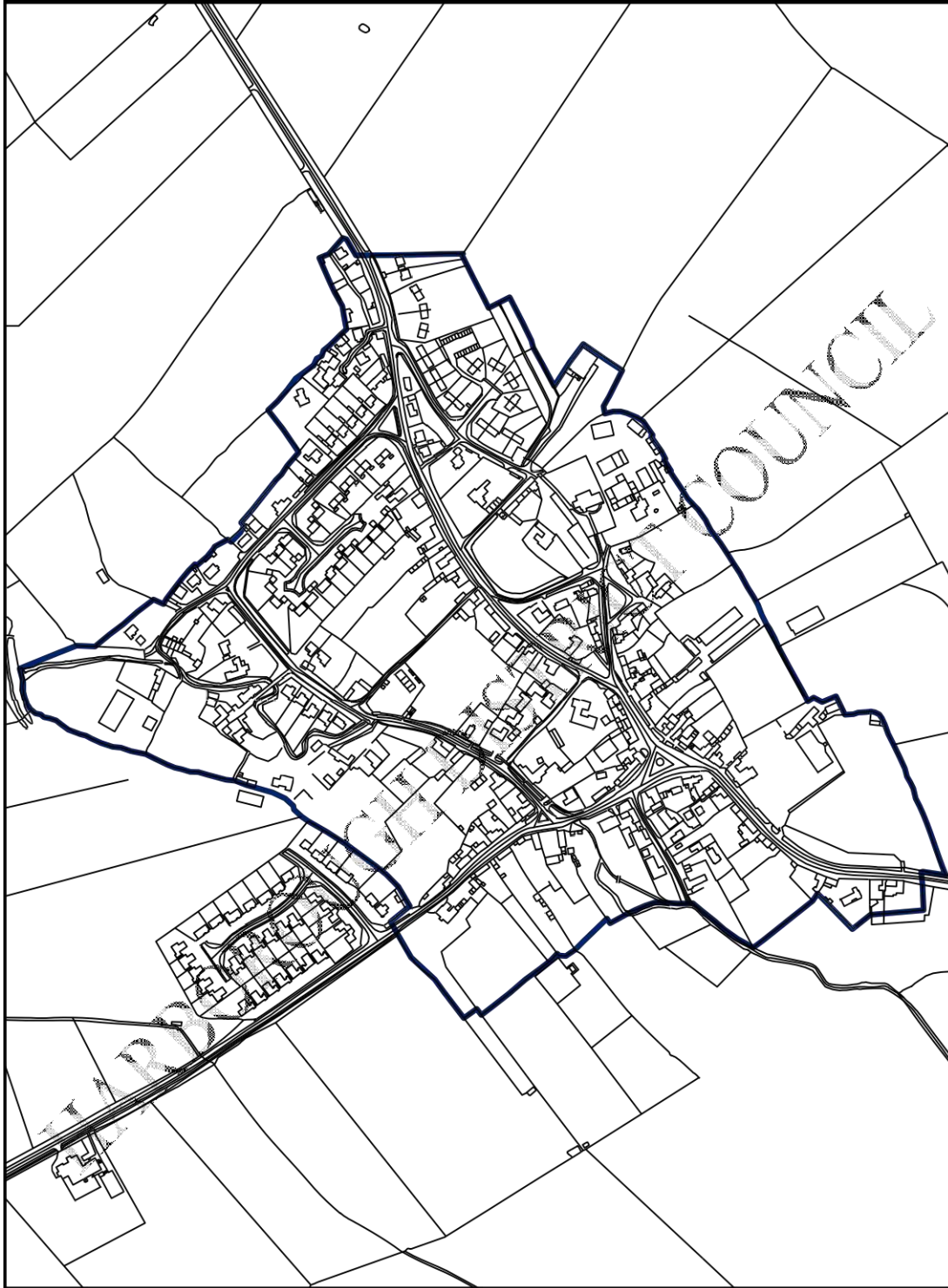
Two special characteristics are highlighted in the character statement: firstly the number of open spaces between and behind the roads and jitties, two such being behind Barnsdale to the north west and between High Street and Brook Lane, this containing a fine Ash tree. Secondly, the location of larger houses and cottages away from the principal roads up smaller lanes such as Banbury Lane, Deepdale and Little London.

The character statement describes in some detail the special features of Great Easton that give it its unique feel and atmosphere. “The number of roads and jitties together with the many traditional stone buildings gives rise to many attractive groupings and vistas. These include Barnsdale, with the triangular junction of Barnsdale, Brook Lane with a stream running alongside, and Cross Bank; the two triangles in the High Street, one with the small green and War Memorial at the south, the other at the bifurcation of High Street and Church Bank having a K6 red telephone call box at the apex. The vista up Church Bank to the church with its spire is especially fine. Between the telephone call box and the church is an intimate enclosed green on Church Bank which opens out upwards to the church and churchyard. The entrance to the village Conservation Area from each of the two southern roads is marked by a notable early 19th century building, facing outwards along the road, rather than fronting the road: Barnsdale House looking towards Bringhurst, and No. 28 Caldecott Road looking towards Caldecott”. Two further triangles on High Street include one opposite the Village Hall (with a significant tree) and one at the junction with Broadgate with a tree and a bench.



The Conservation Area in Great Easton, shown at Figure 3, which covers most of the village, was first designated in 1974 and the boundary was revised in 2005. Any development would need to respect the Conservation Area and the extremely high number of listed buildings (including their setting) through sensitive siting and design.

Figure 3: Great Easton Conservation area.





There are also a number of built landmarks around the Parish that contribute to the overall character of Great Easton. Many are identified as being of national importance, and legally protected through their Listed Building Status. These are:

1, Barnsdale House	Brook House	War Memorial Cross
10, Barnsdale	Brookside Cottage	Well Head to Manor Farm, Circa 250 Metres North East of Church of St Andrew
10, Cross Bank	Brookside House	
11, Banbury Lane	Bybrook House	
12 and 13, Church Bank	Church of St Andrew	Westbrook House
14, Barnsdale	Deepdale Cottage	Wignell Tomb at Churchyard of St Andrew c. 1 Metre South of South Porch of Church
16, Broadgate	Furleigh Cottage	
17 and 18, Cross Bank	Garden Wall at the Old Rectory and the Vicarage	
19, Brook Lane	Holme Leigh House	Woodbine Cottage
2, Little London	K6 Kiosk at the Junction with Church Bank	
21, High Street		
24, Brook Lane		
3, Barnsdale	L C Ellingworth, Butcher	
39, High Street		
47, High Street	Linden House	
8 and 10, High Street	Together with Wall and Barn	
8, Barnsdale	Stable to Rear and Circa 5 Metres South West of Holme Leigh House	
9, Barnsdale		
Barn and adjoining range of outbuildings at number 3 Barnsdale	Stone Walls	
Barn to Left Side and Circa 15 Metres South East of Holme Leigh	The Old Post Office	
	The Old Rectory	
Barnsdale Cottage	The Sun Public House	
Barnsdale House	The Thatch	
Broadgate House	The Thatched House	

Their designation as a Listed Building gives them statutory protection, and highlighting them in the Neighbourhood Plan helps to ensure that all interested parties are aware of their local importance and merit.

# 10. Natural and Historical Environment

## Introduction

Many of what are considered by local people to be the defining characteristics of Great Easton – its open fields, the village tucked into its own small valley, the stone-built houses and broad, green lanes – are the result of over a thousand years of distinctive history. Unusually for Leicestershire (and more generally), Great Easton has a continuous historical record since before the Norman Conquest.

Domesday Book (1086) records the whole *Manor of Easton* (most of Bringhurst, Great Easton and Drayton, as well as the now-lost Prestgrave) as being the property of Peterborough Abbey, to which it had been gifted by Earl Ralph of Hereford before 1066; indeed some historians suggest the gift had originally been by Ethelred of Mercia in about 700 AD, putting Great Easton's establishment at the very beginning of the Danish settlement of 'Midland England'.

Easton has been associated with Peterborough abbey and cathedral from then until modern times, a continuity of land ownership and rural economy unmatched in the area. Later events, which included the 13<sup>th</sup> century emparkment of part of the north of the Parish, the early (16<sup>th</sup> century-on) enclosure of parts of the three open arable fields for sheep and the consequent development of green lanes (for managing them in the village), and the relatively late (1810) Parliamentary Enclosure of the rest of the fields, all influenced land use and layout to such an extent that the present-day village and Parish landscapes are highly distinctive. Moreover, and importantly, Great Easton remains predominantly a working rural parish based on agriculture, with five working farms. It is this rural landscape, Great Easton's natural and historical environment and the contributions they make to sustainable development that residents seek to celebrate and preserve through the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Local Green Spaces

### Protecting Great Easton’s most environmentally significant sites

Conserving and enhancing the rich natural and historical environment of Great Easton is important in its own right and underpins health, wellbeing, sustainability and the distinctive and attractive character of the neighbourhood.

The NPPF enables a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan to identify for protection green areas of particular local importance, where they meet specified criteria. The NPPF states that designation should only be used in special circumstances where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The locations of sites referred to in the proposed environmental Policies and Community Actions in the Neighbourhood Plan are shown in the maps below.

An environmental inventory (Appendix 2, map Appendix 10) of the Parish was carried out between summer 2015 and June 2016, using fieldwork and desk study. The 8 key sites identified as being of notable environmental and community significance were scored using the NPPF criteria for Local Green Space selection and designation. The following eight key sites were shown, using this methodology, to be of outstanding significance, both for their natural and historical environment features and as important, highly-valued community assets, and are proposed here as candidates for designation as Local Green Spaces.

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**POLICY NHE 1: PROTECTION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES – The following sites are designated as Local Green Space, where development is ruled out other than in exceptional circumstances:**

**Holt View (Fig. 4.1 reference 02 );**

Rectory Farm Paddock (03);

Church Bank Verges and Greens (04);

Brook Lane Paddock (05);

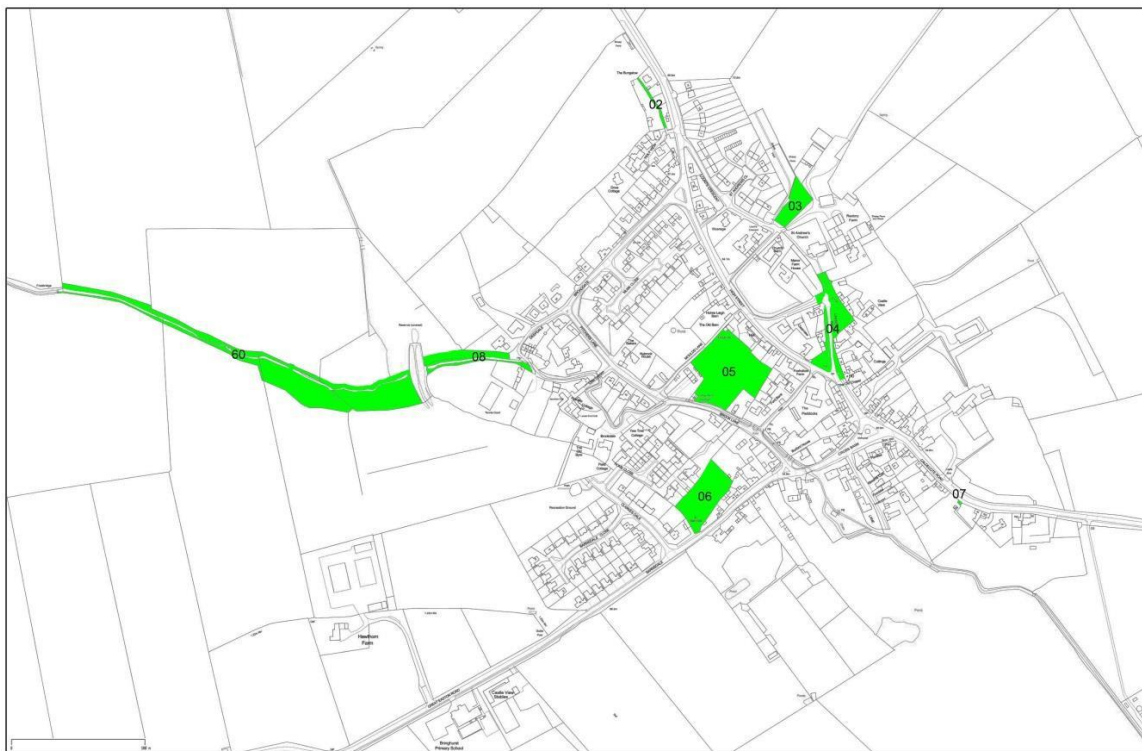
Barnsdale Paddock (06);

Independent Chapel (07);

Deepdale (08);

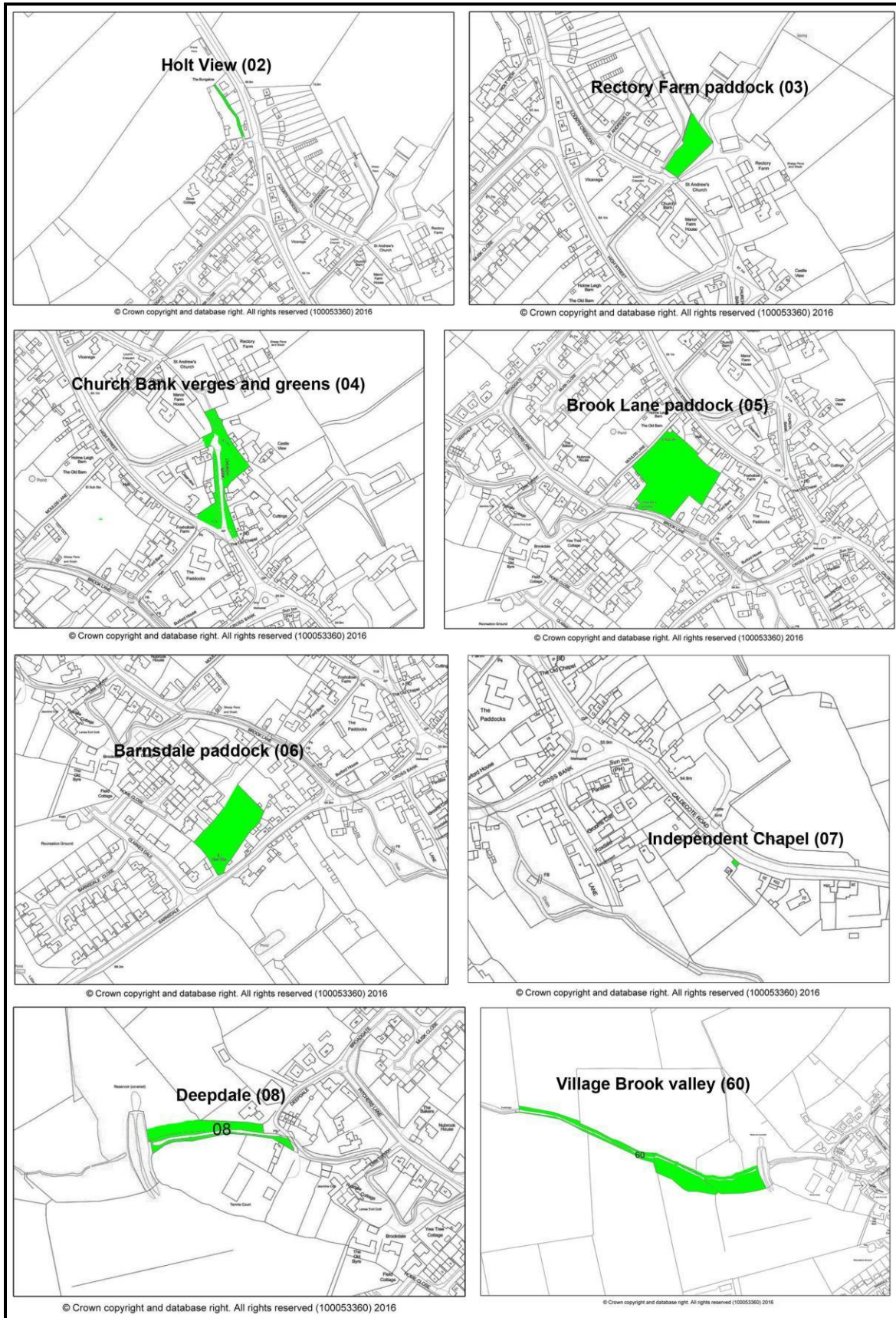
Village Brook Valley (60).

Figure 4.1 – Local Green Spaces: general location map



Date Created: 3-6-2016 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 464194 / 293015 | Scale: 1:3998 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100053360) 2016

Figure 4.2 Local Green Spaces: individual site maps (not to scale)







Community Action NHE 1: OTHER IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE – The Parish Council will actively work with Harborough District Council and other partners to secure the protection of the locations and features of the following sites (listed and mapped below, figure 5, and detailed in Appendix 4 through existing or new designation as Harborough District Council OSSR sites.

St. Andrew’s Churchyard HDC Burial Ground OSSR 2595

Great Easton cemetery HDC Burial Ground OSSR 2790

Children’s Play Area, village hall HDC Play Area OSSR

Moulds Lane (map ref 10)

Vicarage Lane (11)

Hollands Lane (12)

Sawpit Lane (13)

Broadgate / Pitchers Lane junction and verges HDC Amenity Open Space 314 (14)

Broadgate / High Street junction HDC Amenity Open Space 326

High Street verges HDC Amenity Open Space 639 (15)

Village Green north HDC Amenity Open Space 448

War Memorial Green HDC Amenity Open Space 222

Lounts Crescent verges (16)

Brook Lane verges and stream banks (17)

Open space between cemetery and garage court (18)

Clark’s Piece Recreation Ground and Play Area (both HDC OSSR sites) (43)

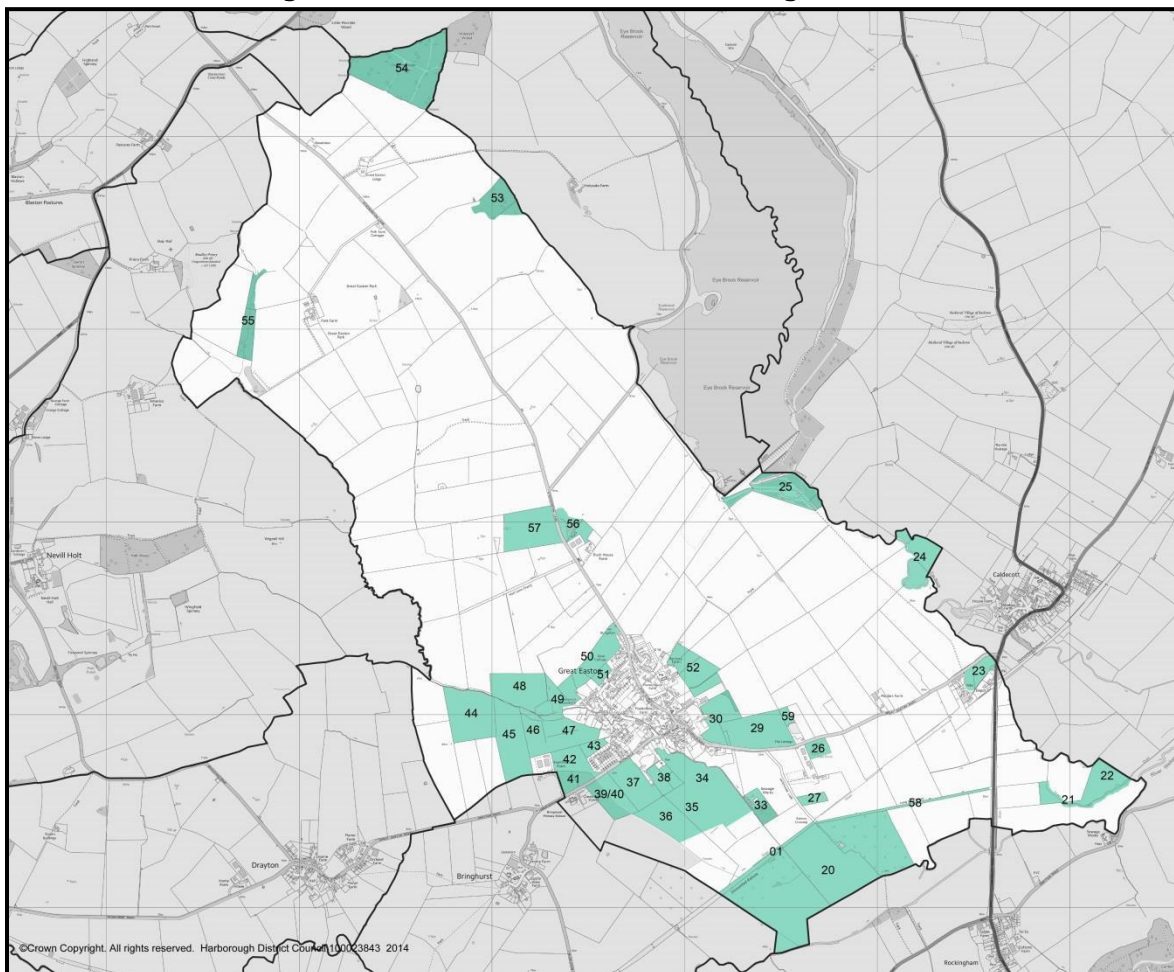
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## Other sites of natural or historical environment significance

The environmental inventory (Appendix 2, inventory map Appendix 6) used fieldwork, existing designations and local knowledge, together with the results of community consultations conducted as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. All accessible parcels of undeveloped land were reviewed, and 59 of these were assessed as being of environmental significance at levels from national (SSSI), through County and District (existing designations, nature reserve) to local (mostly the Neighbourhood Plan fieldwork).

Figure 6: Other sites of environmental significance



As for sections b. and c. above, NPPF Local Green Space criteria were used to score these sites. The best of them are noted here so that their locations and features can be taken into consideration in the Planning process.

**COMMUNITY ACTION NHE 2: OTHER SITES OF NATURAL OR HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE** – The Parish Council will actively work with third parties to seek to secure the protection of the sites shown above in Figure 6.

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## **Ridge and Furrow**

A characteristic feature of Great Easton is the survival of a number of ridge and furrow fields, close to the settlement area and in a group to its northwest. A survey in 2015 confirmed their extant state by comparison with Google Earth photography dating from 2011. The Inventory map (Appendix 4) shows all visible ridge and furrow in the Parish, while the map below (Figure 7) shows those selected as being the best-preserved and thus considered to be worthy of protection.

Like almost all other rural settlements in the Midlands (and across lowland northwest Europe) Great Easton village was almost entirely surrounded by such medieval plough lands until the time of its Enclosure (1810).

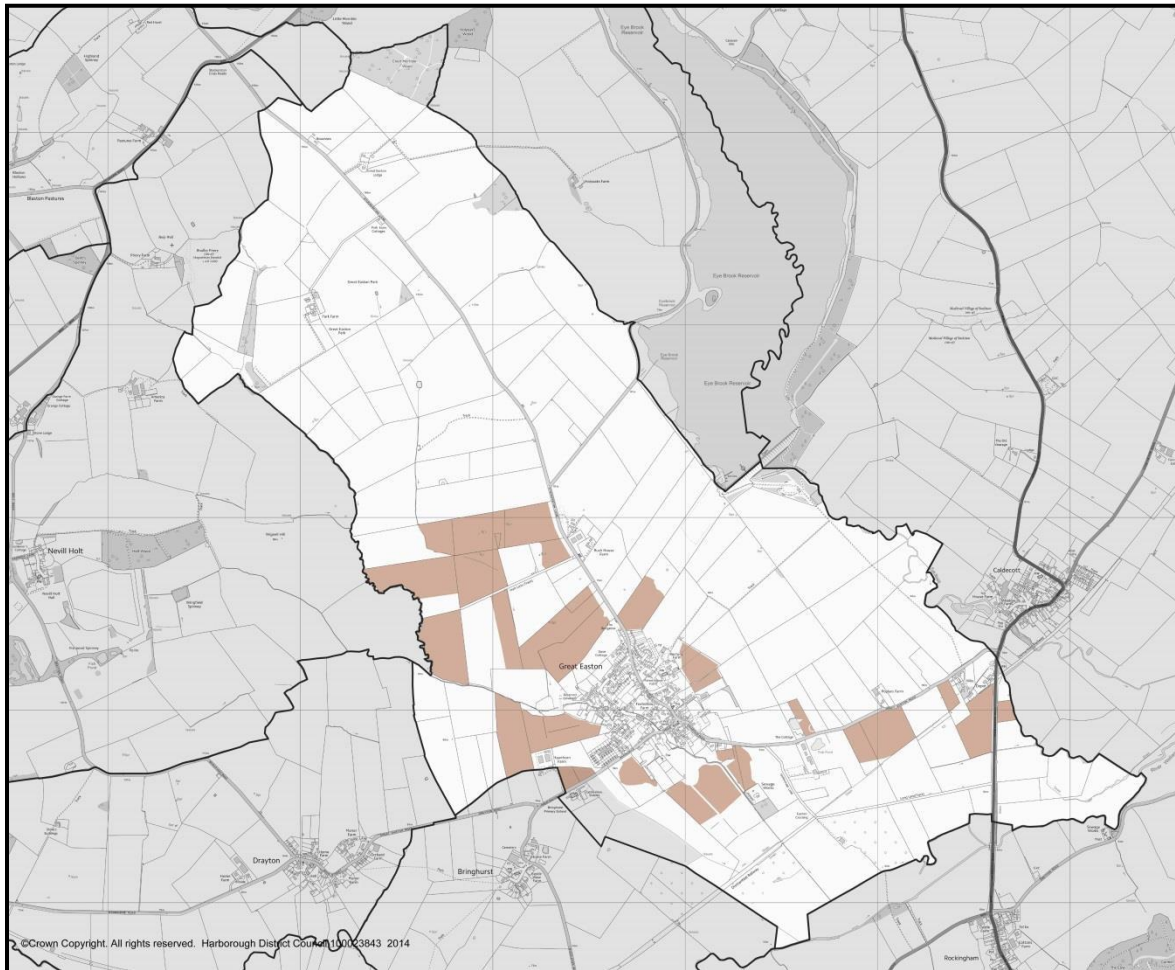
Reflecting the national trend (loss of between 95% and 100% per Parish, mostly since 1940), Great Easton has seen a significant decline in ridge and furrow fields. Only some 27 of the c.140 fields (20% by number, 8.6% by area) in the Parish retain well-preserved examples (map below).

In English legislation, except for the few that are also Scheduled Monuments, ridge and furrow fields are not protected, despite a recognition that *“as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance”* (English Heritage, 2012).

While individual fields in Great Easton are not considered to be of international importance, they are an important part of the distinctive character of the Parish and provide a link to its historic past. They are valued by the local community and any further loss of ridge and furrow in

Great Easton would be irreversibly detrimental. This policy not only seeks to protect the remaining ridge and furrow fields from development, but highlights their importance to the community, especially bearing in mind that many of the threats to ridge and furrow fields often involve types of development and practices that do not require planning approval.

**Figure 7 – Ridge and Furrow**



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**POLICY NHE2: RIDGE AND FURROW FIELDS – Development should not result in harm to surviving areas of ridge and furrow fields, identified on the map above.**

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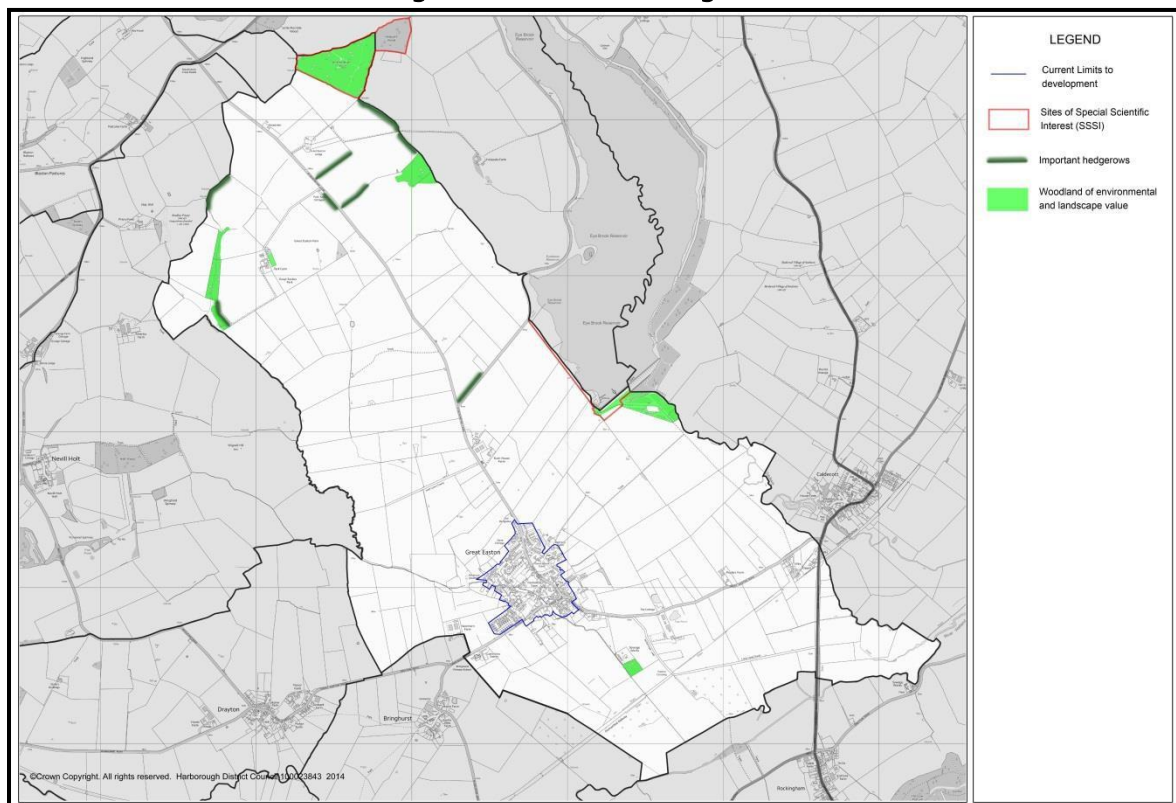
**Community Action NHE 3: Ridge and Furrow Fields. The Parish Council will strongly resist development proposals that adversely affect or**

damage an identified surviving area of ridge and furrow earthworks (see map, figure 7)

## Trees and hedgerows

Great Easton has very little surviving woodland or species-rich hedges, as much of the woodland was cleared in the Middle Ages. There are currently six Group Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and three individual TPOs in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, while others are protected by being in the Conservation Area. In view of this relative scarcity of woodland it is the wish of the community that all trees of landscape, arboricultural or ecological significance should have some protection, and that (in addition to the existing TPOs and Great Merrible Wood SSSI and LRWT Reserve) the four other main areas of woodland in the Parish (map below, figure 8 and Appendix 7) should be maintained as such.

Figure 8: Trees and Hedgerows



A survey by local historians and ecologists in 2014 was able to identify a



small number of species-rich hedgerows in the parish, mainly in the northern part (which is known to have been the site of a small medieval deer park). The distribution of indicator species of woodland, particularly dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, supported this. Most hedges appear to have been planted after the 1810 reorganisation of field boundaries in the Enclosure

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**POLICY NHE 3: IMPORTANT TREES AND HEDGES – Development proposals that damage or result in the loss of woodland (map above, figure 8) or individual trees of arboricultural, landscape or ecological significance and amenity value will not be supported. Development that harms the areas of species-rich hedgerows identified in the map above will not be supported**

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**Community Action NHE 3: The Parish Council will seek to work with landowners, community groups and appropriate charities and other organisations to identify suitable sites for planting and subsequent management as community woodlands**

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## **Biodiversity**

As noted elsewhere, Great Easton is a Parish with a few isolated pockets of nationally and locally important habitat, only relatively little woodland and few species-rich hedgerows. Although much of the farmland is, or has been, under Entry Level Environmental Stewardship (some of it, in fact, managed as if at the Higher Level), and with several fields growing wild bird seed as a crop, overall biodiversity across the Neighbourhood Plan Area is relatively low. The need for every parish to make its own contribution to reversing the current threats to and loss of priority habitats and species is recognised in Great Easton; the following Policy and related Community Action are aimed at protecting the species and habitats that remain here and at beginning the process of restoring lost

habitats and enhancing biodiversity.

Biodiversity enhancement (species and habitats) is supported by the NPPF, which is itself compliant with the European Habitats Directive 1992 (*Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*) and the UK *Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations, 2010, Amended 2012*.

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**POLICY NHE 4: BIODIVERSITY – Development proposals will be expected to protect local habitats and species and where possible and viable, to create new habitats for wildlife.**

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**Community Action NHE 4: BIODIVERSITY – The Parish Council in conjunction with other bodies will prepare and keep updated an environmental inventory list of known sites of biodiversity interest.**

The Parish Council will encourage projects for enhancing riparian habitats around the main watercourses of the River Welland, Eye Brook and Great Easton Brook.

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## **Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways**

For historical reasons, Great Easton is not well served by public footpaths or bridleways. The medieval tracks to Bringhurst, Caldecott and Drayton are now public roads, leaving only those to Nevill Holt, Blaston and Rockingham as off-road paths; others are short and local. There are no official circular routes from the village, although residents do make use of a path and field margins toward Eyebrook Reservoir and back, and part of the dismantled railway line.

There is considerable evidence for the benefits of country walking as a leisure activity that contributes to health and wellbeing, but the present

incomplete network does not encourage widespread participation. Where possible the existing network should be extended and enhanced, with more paths generally and the development of circular routes.

Parking on Great Easton Road outside Bringhurst School is widely recognised as problematic for safety and traffic congestion; one reason is the absence of an off-road route to enable Great Easton pupils to cycle safely to school. There is a strong community desire for such a route to be constructed, both for leisure and as an alternative to car use.

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**POLICY NHE 5: FOOTPATHS, BRIDLEWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS – Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths will not be supported.**

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**Community Action NHE 5: Footpaths, bridleways and cycleways – The Parish Council will actively seek to work with other bodies to achieve enhancements to the present network of footpaths, including replacement of stiles with kissing gates where appropriate, and to develop an off-road or separated roadside cycleway from the village to Bringhurst School.**

**The Parish Council will, where possible, seek developer contributions to provide for improvements and extensions to public rights of way**

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## **Rivers and flooding**

The village brook and its tributaries drain over ten square kilometres of (mostly) farmland, of which some 30% is currently grassland and the remainder arable. Less than 2% of the Parish is woodland. More than two-thirds of this catchment is on clay, and although there are areas of sand/gravel and some outcrops of ironstone and siltstone, most of the catchment subsoil is therefore largely impermeable and subject to rapid

run-off at times of high rainfall. Some modern farming methods inevitably exacerbate this. This is because run-off is almost instantaneous on intensive winter-sown arable – ploughed in September then cultivated (raked and smoothed) and sown with cereal or rape – producing a smooth surface over which the water runs in sheets; tractor 'tramlines' provide ready-made channels to send the water (and soil) directly into watercourses. This is in contrast to the old ways – either left fallow (stubble etc) to be cultivated and sown the following spring, or ploughed in September but not cultivated or drilled (sown), so leaving lumps and furrows which hold rainwater and let it soak in or run off slowly. The intensive new way works reasonably well on light, well-drained land (e.g. sand or limestone) which is porous and permeable – allowing rain to soak in. However in Leicestershire the land is mostly impermeable clay.

In medieval times the ridge and furrow fields were arable 2 years out of 3, and they did grow autumn-sown crops, but a) they didn't have machines to produce a smooth 'tilth' right across the fields, b) they had good ditches, c) they didn't build in river floodplains and d) they were circumspect about flooding when it happened.

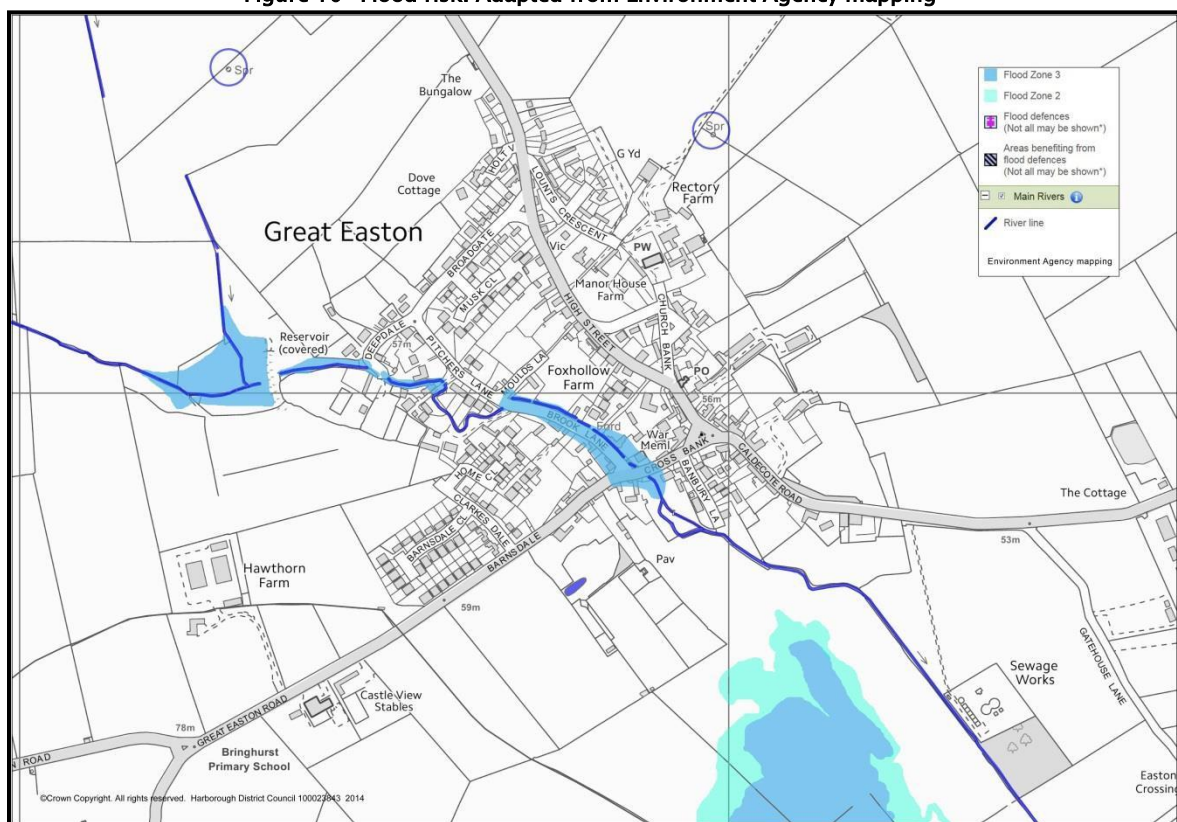
Improved grass fields, especially if newly-sown or heavily grazed, also speed run-off compared with unimproved or 'semi-improved' grass on ridge & furrow which absorb a high % of rain.

The ancient settlement of Easton was located here because the brook provided water, and the pattern of buildings and lanes reflects this close historical association between the inhabitants and the brook, which today remains a characteristic and valued component of the village landscape. However the map (below, Figure 10, Appendix 9) based on Environment Agency data) shows that the aesthetic benefit must be balanced against flood risk: a strip of land within the built-up area, including roads, gardens and residential properties, is classified as flood risk zone 3. Within this area residents report regular (and increasing frequency of) flooding. Three flood-related issues are of concern to residents:



- Although flooding of infrastructure and houses has occurred historically, modern domestic building/decorative materials, heating, lighting and technology are far more susceptible to water damage than in the past.
- Building standards and the location of new development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century took minimal cognisance of the risks of flooding, while woodland clearance and intensive agricultural practices have increased the speed of rain- and surface-water runoff.
- Climate change appears to be increasing the intensity and volume of rainwater runoff and the frequency of storm events.

Figure 10– Flood risk. Adapted from Environment Agency mapping



The Neighbourhood Plan therefore supports all initiatives for mitigating the effects of flooding now and for the sustainable management of rivers and surface water, including flood risk, in the future.

**Community Action NHE 6: Great Easton Parish Council will support proposals by landowners, appropriate agencies and organisations:**

- a. to improve the current infrastructural measures in the Parish for managing and mitigating river, run-off and surface water flooding;  
and
  - b. to use low-tech strategies and works, including ‘re-wilding’ of water courses, natural dams and tree-planting in the catchment area and upstream to reduce the rates of run-off and stream flow through the village.
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# 11. Employment

## Support for existing

In line with many parishes its size, Great Easton has few businesses within the Parish, the closest employment opportunities being in Corby. Traditionally the main business activities have been related to farming and agriculture.

Through community consultation, comments were mixed about the need for further employment opportunities in Great Easton. Some considered small business development to be a good thing whilst others commented that employment opportunities were not needed as Great Easton is a village not a town. Homeworking was identified as an appropriate and important activity that needed to be taken into account.

2011 Census data revealed that there was an increasing number of residents who were home workers (11% of people living in the Parish (aged 16–64) compared to 8% in Harborough District and 3.5% across England). 68% of the population aged 16–74 were economically active compared to 74% across Harborough District, reflecting the older age profile of parishioners. 74% of the economically inactive were retired. Of those working, 78% went to work in a car or van which is higher than across Harborough District (71%). The lack of employment opportunities in the Parish may well contribute to this figure.

Because of the restricted employment opportunities within the Parish, it is considered to be important that such facilities are protected against being lost to other uses. To do so, the Parish Council considers it necessary to seek to restrict the demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises or land (B-class uses) that are currently being used for trade for non-commercial purposes such that only if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of such commercial premises or land being used for employment-generating purposes should this be allowed.

In order therefore to demonstrate that such commercial premises or land can be redeveloped for non-commercial uses, it should be demonstrated that there is little or no prospect of the premises or land being reoccupied by an employment-generating user in the future. The marketing campaign referred to in the policy below will be expected to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to market the property and that there has been no interest from a credible party.

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**POLICY E1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES – There will be a strong presumption against the loss of commercial premises or land (B-class) that are currently being used for trade and which provides employment and future potential employment opportunities. Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that:**

- a) The commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least six months; and
- b) The commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least six months.

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### **Support for new employment opportunities**

Some support for new employment opportunities has been recognised through community consultation which has identified broad support for a stronger local economy which will provide more local employment opportunities thus encouraging new business start-ups or expansion of those existing businesses within the Parish. Consequently, these opportunities should be accommodated wherever possible and businesses

should be encouraged to remain within the community and to grow. The Parish also needs to attract appropriate new enterprises in the right locations to boost and diversify the local economy and to provide more local employment opportunities.

Support for appropriate business development was welcomed throughout the various consultation processes. However, employment proposals should only be seen as acceptable if they avoid harmful impacts on other matters agreed to be locally important such as residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment.

The draft Local Plan supports the rural economy by allowing for new employment land to be provided to help create or safeguard jobs and this is also an aspiration for the NPPF.

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**POLICY E2: SUPPORT FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES – New employment-generating development will be supported where it:**

- a) Falls within the boundary of planned limits of development for Great Easton unless it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities, or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location or there are proven exceptional circumstances; and
- b) Reuses land or buildings wherever possible; and
- c) Is of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment of the village itself and the neighbourhood plan area, including the countryside; and
- d) Does not involve the loss of dwellings; and
- e) Does not increase noise levels to an extent that they would unacceptably disturb occupants of nearby residential property; and
- f) Does not generate unacceptable levels of traffic movement; and
- g) Contributes to the character and vitality of the local area; and

**h) Is well integrated into and complement existing businesses.**

**The following types of employment development will be supported:**

- a) Small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the Parish;**
  - b) Small-scale new build development within the Limits to Development.**
- 

## **Farm diversification**

There are five working farms remaining in the Parish. To help maintain the rural economy and protect the open countryside from inappropriate development, the Neighbourhood Plan supports the sustainable growth and expansion of business and enterprise through the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside. Specifically, this is intended to:

- I. Promote a viable and sustainable farming and rural economy in Great Easton Parish;
- II. Promote the diversification of rural businesses;
- III. Encourage new businesses to provide a wider range of local produce, services and leisure facilities, to provide local employment and attract visitors to the Parish;
- IV. Maintain and enhance the local environment of rural and agricultural lands.

The change of use of some rural buildings to new uses is already permitted under the General Permitted Development Orders.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2014 allows, under certain circumstances, the change of use of agricultural buildings to residential use and change of use of agricultural buildings to registered nurseries providing childcare or state-funded schools, under the prior approval system.

**POLICY E3: RE-USE OF AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS** – The re-use, conversion and adaptation of rural buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes will be supported where:

- a) The use proposed is appropriate to the rural location
  - b) The conversion/adaptation works respect the local character of the surrounding area;
  - c) The development will not result in any unacceptable harm in respect of any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental features;
  - d) The local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site;
  - e) There is no unacceptable harm to neighbours through noise, light pollution, increased traffic levels or increased flood risk
- 

## **Broadband infrastructure**

The importance of maintaining internet connectivity and having access to new information technologies is recognised to support local businesses and employment across the Parish.

The modern economy is changing and increasingly requires a good communications infrastructure as a basic requirement to maximise technological advances. The internet is driving business innovation and growth, helping people access services, and opening up new opportunities for learning. This is particularly important in small rural settings where better broadband will enable improved access to an increasing number of on-line applications and services provided by the public and private sector and can help to reduce social exclusion.

The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago – in Great Easton Parish 11% of people work from home (above the Harborough-wide total of 8% and over double the regional and national percentages) and 15% are self-employed, again higher than district (12.9%) , regional (8.7%) or national (9.8%) levels.

The need for high speed broadband to serve Great Easton is therefore very important.

Broadband speeds have recently improved and it is essential to the continuing maintenance and expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office that widespread access to effective broadband remains in place.

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**POLICY E4: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE – Proposals to provide access to a super-fast broadband service for new development (of at least 30mbps) and to improve the mobile telecommunication network that will serve businesses and other properties within the Parish will be supported. This may require aboveground network installations, which must be sympathetically located and designed to integrate into the landscape and not be located in or near to open landscapes**

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## **Homeworking**

In rural areas such as Great Easton the benefit of supporting home working is that it helps to promote employment activities whilst reducing the dependency of the car for journeys to employment sites outside the Parish.

There is a need to recognise the high levels of people who state that they work from home. The Neighbourhood Plan reflects this in its proposals to provide a wider range of housing and to support the provision of local business premises.



The intention of Policy E5 is to recognise that people may not have a suitable space within their home from which to run a business, or they may wish distinctly and deliberately to separate their work and living space. Policy E5 supports the construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new free standing buildings in gardens from which businesses can operate. This is intended to maximise the opportunity for home run enterprises to be created and supported in the long term in Great Easton.

Policy E5 would apply where a material change of use occurs, such that planning permission is required. This reflects positive support for entrepreneurial activity in line with the NPPF and Harborough District Council's draft Local Plan.

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**POLICY E5: WORKING FROM HOME – Proposals for the use of part of a dwelling for office and/or light industrial uses, and for small scale free standing buildings within its curtilage, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses, will be supported where:**

- 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; and
  - b) Any extension or free standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.
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## 12. Community Facilities and Amenities

### Introduction

Great Easton benefits from a good range of local facilities and amenities, which include the park, open spaces, village hall, shop/post office, pub, church and primary school. These assets, supported by local enthusiasm and goodwill, make a significant contribution to community cohesion and to the vitality of Great Easton. They have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village, enhancing the quality of life, and often providing an important focal point for social interaction.

There are nearly 20 clubs and societies regularly meeting in the Parish. To maintain the on-going prosperity of Great Easton it is considered essential that it retains local facilities and services that sustain the vitality of the community and encourage local participation in community activities.

In the process of compiling this section of the Neighbourhood Plan, a community facilities working group was established which conducted over 70 interviews with a wide cross section of the community including young people from Bringhurst Primary school and groups representing older people, prepared questionnaires to gather detailed information and organised open events to share findings and to hear first-hand what local people wanted.

A number of key themes began to emerge through this process as follows:

- The vast majority of residents see Great Easton as a safe and secure community with little or no antisocial behaviour or crime.
- There is a strong sense of pride in the community and in the environment which residents would like to see developed further, especially through improved channels of communication and volunteering.
- Residents feel there is a strong community spirit in the village, which they would like to see extended to include a greater sharing

of responsibility and an increased participation in parish life, and which can be achieved through the implementation of a communications strategy that informs residents of community events, encourages recruitment of volunteers and leads to the creation of new clubs, societies and community events.

- Community events are seen as one of the real strengths of the Parish, particularly those that foster a sense of community and belonging. Residents feel this sense of community can be improved with better facilities at the village hall and the park. Suggestions include refurbishment of the village hall and additional facilities in the park for teenagers (Skate Park and covered seating area, football goal plus others referenced in the supporting information) and sturdy fitness equipment for adults and teenagers. There is a strong view that these improved and new facilities would enhance more social interaction and could also encourage healthier lifestyles for a broad age group.
- A strong feature of the research was the need to create opportunities for young people to experience independence and restricted adult supervision.

In conclusion, residents of all ages want to protect their community and meet identified needs. Residents want to create opportunities for the community to become stronger through the development of physical and practical support, especially with opportunities for younger people and the elderly. This requires the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities. (The full list of residents' aspirations is contained in the supporting information).

## **Community Facilities and Amenities in Great Easton**

The community facilities and amenities of greatest importance to the community of Great Easton include the following:

- **Park/Open spaces.**

Open spaces include the park with its children's play area and footpaths that lead into the wider countryside. The park and open green spaces in

and around the Parish all contribute significantly to the character and quality of the local environment and people who live in the Parish wish to see these green spaces conserved and enhanced. The environmental section (chapter

10) identifies these areas. Our research indicates a deficiency in play facilities and equipment in the park. This conclusion is further supported by responses received during interviews with young people.

- **The Village Hall.**

The village hall is an important asset for the village. Many groups, societies and clubs, as well as private users, use the facilities on a regular basis. 77 respondents to the community questionnaire (47%) use the village hall. The village hall has an active management committee. On-going refurbishment is required to maintain the level of quality required for public use. The village hall is seen as a potential venue for a Village Archive to help sustain it into the future.

- **The Village Shop/Post Office.**

The parish survey findings show that 150 respondents, almost 91%, of respondents use the village shop/post office with 131 using it on either a daily or weekly basis. The shop is a key element of the village facilities providing an important service to the local community. In addition many residents would be concerned if the village shop were to close. With increasing car use the viability of many rural services has declined significantly in recent years, as local residents increasingly use larger retail outlets located in Corby and Market Harborough.

- **The Pub.**

The Sun Inn public house is enjoyed by many villagers, 29% of respondents, as well as playing an important part in village life. It also provides a service to visitors passing through the village.

- **The Church.**

St. Andrew's Church is reasonably well attended and is part of the parish of Six Saints, which includes Great Easton, Drayton, Bringhurst, Medbourne, Stockerston and Blaston. Bell ringers meet regularly at the church. Parishioners would like toilets to be installed.

- **The School.**

The Bringhurst Primary School provides an important education facility for the local community. Policy and legislative changes have resulted in Local Management of Schools by Governing Bodies of Schools in England. This has reduced the role of English Local Education Authorities (LEAs), resulting in schools being largely autonomous. Travel to school is a major factor leading to congestion at Bringhurst Primary School. The location of Bringhurst Primary School generates traffic flow through Bringhurst Road at school start and finishing times, especially the morning peak travel period. One of the key issues from the survey, interviews and Open Days was a lack of suitable car parking and the school should address this issue for parents/carers who drop off their children before school and collection after school. However these responses strongly argued that the school should fund this project.

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**POLICY CF1: PROTECTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES**  
– Proposals that result in the loss of any building or land providing a community facility or amenity will not be supported unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the facility or amenity is no longer financially viable or of value to the community or a suitable replacement can be provided elsewhere in an equally convenient location.

Any community facility or amenity proposed for disposal should be advertised by the seller in an appropriate publication for 6 months at a price that reflects an independent professional valuation. Information included with the application should include the selling agent's literature together with valuations and offers that have been received on the property.

Community facilities and amenities include the Village Hall, St Andrews Church, Bringhurst Primary School and Playing Field, The Sun Inn and the Village Shop/Post Office.

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Community Action CF1: Community Assets – The Parish Council will seek to register the Village Shop as an Asset of Community Value and will seek the funding necessary to help secure the future of this important community facility. Other potential Assets of Community Value will be identified through the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan

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### **Provision of new community facilities**

Consultation has demonstrated that residents would like to see a range of new and improved facilities such as allotments (56 respondents), more activities for young people (40 respondents), installation of health and fitness equipment in the park for adults and teenagers, plus other suggestions, including an Archive Centre, which are detailed in the supporting information. A summary of the Community Facilities consultations and “wish list” is at Appendix 11.

It is our intention to preserve and enhance existing and new community facilities, open spaces and services whilst widening their use, and ensuring they are easily accessible to all. The Great Easton Neighbourhood survey, Open Days, research and interviews identified and reinforced the value of community facilities within the Parish and their importance to the life, character, enjoyment and wellbeing of the village community. Development of existing community facilities to provide better places to meet, from young and old, was a strong theme of our research.

**POLICY CF2: PROVISION OF NEW COMMUNITY FACILITIES**–The diversification or enhancement of Great Easton's range of community facilities will be supported provided that the development does not impact on the amenity of residential properties; will not generate a need for parking that cannot be adequately catered for; and is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle.

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### **Allotments and community garden**

Allotments offer an improved quality of life, an enjoyable hobby, low-cost food, relaxation and contact with nature. For children, gardens offer places to play and to learn about nature. For the elderly and disabled, gardens offer an opportunity to meet people, to share in activity with like-minded people, and to experience activities like planting and harvesting, plus enhancing physical and mental wellbeing

There is an under provision of allotments in the Parish and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to redress this omission.

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**Community Action CF2: Allotments and Community Gardens – The Parish Council will seek to purchase or rent land for allotments.**

**The Parish Council and volunteers will seek to secure funding to establish this community resource.**

**Potential sites will be identified as suitable for the construction of community gardens and allotments.**

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## **Support for young people**

Young people have engaged fully during the process of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan and have expressed clear views about their aspirations for the future of the village.

This involves improving facilities in the park and improved provision of activities for young people. The funding required to enhance the facilities or provision will be sought from a range of sources so that the needs of young people within the Parish are achieved in a timely manner.

# 13. Transport and Access

## Introduction

The village sits close to the A6003 which links Uppingham with Corby and ultimately provides access to Market Harborough. Transport links are reasonable with railway stations being located at Corby (6 miles away), Market Harborough (10 miles), Oakham (11 miles) and Kettering (12 miles). The supported Rutland Flyer services connect Great Easton with surrounding villages and the key service centres of Corby, Uppingham and Market Harborough, but is infrequent and provides limited evening and weekend service.

Great Easton, however, as with many rural villages, has heavy reliance on vehicular transport, both private and public. Over 78% of people use a car or van to travel to work, which is higher than the district average of 71%, and the number of cars in the Parish increased between 2001 and 2011 from 371 to 461 – an increase of 24%.

This increasing reliance on the car as a mode of transport has resulted in a growing concern amongst villagers about transport related issues in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Issues raised by residents at the initial consultation event in November 2014 included concerns over speeding as well as safety issues around the School and near the Pub associated with increased volumes of traffic and inconsiderate parking.

The Open Event in November 2015 reinforced the key issues identified by residents. The main issues raised here included speeding in and out of the village and tackling the problems caused by cars parked outside the School at the start and end of the School day. People also highlighted concerns with the junction by the Pub, the ‘pinchpoint’ between Barnsdale House and the cottage on the opposite side of the road and the quality and frequency of public transport.

It was clear during consultation that residents believe that there is a

balance to be achieved between effective traffic management and retaining the village’s rural character. Whilst increased signage may be effective in traffic calming, it also has an urbanising effect which is not generally welcomed by the community.

It was also clear that whilst on–street parking can cause difficult driving conditions and poor visibility it can also act as a traffic calming measure as drivers slow to negotiate unexpected situations.

## Speeding

Leicestershire County Council speed readings undertaken in 2008/2009 recorded speeds in excess of the speed limit at the entrance to the Village from Bringham and past the Primary School. Speeds of 38/39 mph were recorded outside the School itself, although this sits within the official speed limit of 40 mph.

In order to address the issues associated with speeding vehicles, the Neighbourhood Plan supports a range of methods for traffic calming in Great Easton and among the ideas considered has been Village Gateways.

Gateways are used to indicate to drivers where the road changes character, for example at the start of a traffic calming scheme or at the entry to a village, to create a positive first impression of the village and highlight its rural nature.

We propose Village Gateways are introduced in the following locations close to the entrances to the village:

- Caldecott Road
- Great Easton Road/Barnsdale
- Stockerston Road

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**POLICY T1: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT – The provision of ‘Village Gateways’ at the entrances to the village will be supported.**

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## **Road safety**

Concern has been expressed at consultation events in relation to the problems caused by on-street parking outside the Bringhurst Primary school at drop-off and pick-up times. The line of cars parked on the road limits visibility and creates congestion and potential hazards as the two-way traffic flows effectively become single file through the stretch leading to the village boundary. This leads to a build-up of traffic which can result in increased driver frustration which in turn can result in inappropriate manoeuvring.

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**Community Action T1: Road Safety. The Parish Council will investigate the provision of off-street parking in the vicinity of Bringhurst Primary School**

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## **Safe walking and cycling routes**

Encouraging people to walk or use a bicycle for short journeys and leisure purposes can bring significant benefits, reducing congestion on our roads, cutting carbon emissions and creating healthier communities.

Bringhurst Primary School is a significant generator of short car journeys at the beginning and end of the school day. Proposals to improve off-road routes between the School and the village centre have the potential to reduce car trips and the level of traffic congestion in the vicinity of the school; to improve connectivity to other services; and to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

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**POLICY T2: FOOTPATHS & CYCLE PATHS – The protection of the existing cycle and pedestrian network and its extension to provide off-road cycling connections between the Primary School and the village centre will be supported**

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## Other transport-related issues

A number of other measures have been identified through consultation and these will be pursued by the Parish Council as part of an integrated approach to transport related issues in the Parish.

These include pursuing improvements to the road junction and parking outside the pub, where visibility is poor; problems of speeding traffic at Barnsdale where the road narrows; increased parking provision outside the shop and village hall and seeking improvements to public transport.

One area of interest to the Parish Council is to explore the potential to change the road surfacing throughout the village and to remove all white lines to create a sense of differentiation between country roads that have a 60 mph speed limit and a village that requires people to drive with care. The Neighbourhood Plan supports measures that create a feeling that the village is special and well cared for. It is believed that this will have a positive impact on driver behaviour and this will be pursued.

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**Community Action T1: Transport related issues – The Parish Council will work with the Highways Authority and other relevant agencies to bring forward traffic management measures to improve road safety in the Neighbourhood Plan area, especially outside Bringhurst Primary School, exploring the potential for improving traffic flow in the area of the Sun Inn Public House and seeking improvements to public transport.**

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# 14. Delivery

## Communication strategy and Neighbourhood Plan delivery

Through the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, a considerable number of residents and local organisations have been contacted to give their views on the range of services and facilities available in the Parish. This has raised levels of interest in, and expectation about future activities. In order to maximise involvement amongst the community and to ensure that events on offer are likely to be supported, a communication strategy is to be developed to ensure that the maximum number of people are involved in the process.

Following interviews it is evident that although many residents regularly attend village events, more would attend in the future if better information about upcoming activities is made available. Research has demonstrated that the village would like better resources such as allotments to be available and further activities such as social events and fetes to be organised within the village.

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### Community Action DMR1 – Communication strategy and Neighbourhood Plan delivery

The Parish Council will support, enhance and publish existing services and facilities by implementing a communication strategy to encourage greater community involvement by:

- Creating a residents database.
- Publicising events.
- Recruiting volunteers.
- Establishing new groups.
- Engaging and introducing new residents into village life.

The development of Parish Council Committees will be investigated in the

following areas:

- Young Persons Council to replicate the Parish Council.
- Visionary Fundraising Group
- Facility Improvement Committee

Furthermore, the Parish Council will develop arrangements for the monitoring, delivery and regular review of the NP recommendations.

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## 15. Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan will last for a period of 14 years. During this time it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly monitored by Great Easton Parish Council. The policies and measures contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be included.

The Parish Council proposes to formally review the Neighbourhood Plan on a five-year cycle commencing in 2022 or to coincide with the review of the Harborough District Local Plan if this cycle is different.

# Appendices

A list of all the Appendices referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan is below. The appendices are also maintained on the Parish website:

[www.greateaston.org](http://www.greateaston.org)

## Appendix No.

1. Great Easton Housing Needs report – March 2016 1A. Great Easton Census 2011 Profile
- 1B. Great Easton Land Registry Data –1995–2014
2. Inventory of Sites of Environmental Significance
3. Local Green Spaces (LGS) Map
4. Open Green Spaces Map
5. Other Sites of Environmental Significance Map
6. Ridge and Furrow Fields Map
7. Woodlands and Hedgerows Map
8. Views of Landscape and Community Value Map
9. Flood Risk Zone Map
10. Environmental Inventory Map
11. Community Facilities and Emerging Issues
12. Housing Site Selection Process– explanatory notes