

**HOUGHTON on the HILL NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2017 - 2031**

**The Report of the Independent Examiner to Harborough District Council on the
Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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8th December 2017**

Summary

I was appointed by Harborough District Council, in agreement with the Houghton Parish Council, in October 2017 to undertake the Independent Examination of the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Examination has been undertaken by written representations. I visited the Neighbourhood Area on 21st November 2017.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes a local range of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the Houghton Neighbourhood Area. There is an evident focus on safeguarding the very distinctive character of the area whilst accommodating future change and growth.

The Plan has been underpinned by extensive community support and engagement. The social, environmental and economic aspects of the issues identified have been brought together into a coherent plan which adds appropriate local detail to sit alongside the Harborough District Core Strategy 2006 - 2028.

Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this Report I have concluded that the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.

I recommend that the referendum should be held within the Neighbourhood Area.

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Introduction

This report sets out the findings of the Independent Examination of the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2031. The Plan was submitted to Harborough District Council by Houghton Parish Council in their capacity as the 'qualifying body' responsible for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently incorporated within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 and this continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.

This report assesses whether the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan is legally compliant and meets the 'basic conditions' that such plans are required to meet. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends modifications to its policies and supporting text. This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome, the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan would then be used in the process of determining planning applications within the Plan boundary as an integral part of the wider development plan.

The Role of the Independent Examiner

The Examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the legislative and procedural requirements. I was appointed by Harborough District Council, in agreement with the Houghton Parish Council, to conduct the examination of the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan and to report my findings. I am independent of both the Harborough District Council and the Houghton Parish Council. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.

I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I have over 40 years' experience in various local authorities and third sector bodies as well as with the professional body for planners in the United Kingdom. I am a Chartered Town Planner and a panel member for the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS). I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

In my role as Independent Examiner I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the Examination:

- the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan is submitted to a referendum; or
- the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
- the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If recommending that the Neighbourhood Plan should go forward to referendum, I must then consider whether or not the referendum area should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Area to which the Plan relates.

In examining the Plan, I am also required, under paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to check whether:

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

These are helpfully covered in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement and, subject to the contents of this Report, I can confirm that I am satisfied that each of the above points has been properly addressed and met.

In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan as submitted
- Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Basic Conditions Statement (April 2017)
- Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Consultation Statement with Appendices (undated)
- Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination (September 2017)
- Content at <http://www.houghtononthehillpc.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html>
- Representations made to the Regulation 16 public consultation on the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Harborough District Core Strategy 2006 - 2028 and the emerging Harborough District Local Plan
- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)
- Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012)
- Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates)
- The Ministerial Planning Update Statement (March 2015)
- The Neighbourhood Planning Written Statement HCWS346 (December 2016)

I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 21st November 2017. I looked at Houghton on the Hill and its rural hinterland. I also viewed the character of the Conservation Area and all the various sites and locations identified in the Plan document.

The legislation establishes that, as a general rule, neighbourhood plan examinations should be held without a public hearing, by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan which I felt made their points with clarity, I was satisfied that the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan could be examined without the need for a public hearing and I advised Harborough District Council accordingly. The Qualifying Body has helpfully responded to my enquiries so that I may have a thorough understanding of the thinking behind the Plan, as shown on the Harborough District Council neighbourhood planning website for the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Area

A map showing the boundary of the Houghton Neighbourhood Area is provided, as required, on page 5 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Further to an application made by Houghton Parish Council, Harborough District Council approved the designation of the Neighbourhood Area on 31st July 2015. This satisfied the requirement in line with the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan under section 61G(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Consultation

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the qualifying body has prepared a Consultation Statement to accompany the Plan. This records that a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party was delegated by the Parish Council to progress the plan-making. Consultation was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party with independent professional support from the RCC (Leicestershire & Rutland) and Landmark Planning Ltd. Unusually, the Neighbourhood Area includes a part of the neighbouring Hungarton Parish, to provide a more cohesive area for planning purposes, and the Plan acknowledges that the two Parish Councils have worked together in consultation.

It is clear that community involvement has been at the heart of the Plan's production. A varied and extensive approach to community engagement and a range of formal and informal approaches and media has been used to invite and obtain participation. The Annual Parish Meeting in April 2015 was used to launch the Neighbourhood Plan interaction. The issues identified were then taken to wider audiences via Household and Young People Surveys in January 2016; a surgery for residents at Houghton Village Hall provided further information and support to help with completion of the survey. The results of the surveys were used by the Neighbourhood Planning Working Party along with all other consultation material and data to help focus the development of the Plan and potential policy areas based on key local issues and priorities. A comprehensive list of stakeholder contacts was then compiled for consultation and engagement throughout the following planning processes. All identified stakeholders were officially invited to an initial meeting in March 2016; at the meeting attendees were split into 5 workshop groups to complete a facilitated discussion on the key issues and priorities for consideration within the Neighbourhood Plan. Key findings and issues were then presented back to the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2016. The draft Plan Regulation 14 consultation commenced in June 2016 and the 66 comments received were noted and addressed, as recorded in the Consultation Statement and its Appendices.

Overall, the degree of commitment by all participants illustrates the potential of neighbourhood planning to give "communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need" (para 183, National Planning Policy Framework). From all the evidence provided to me for the Examination, I can see that an inclusive and comprehensive approach has been taken to obtaining the input and opinions of all concerned throughout the process. Comments were pro-actively sought and those received were duly considered. I can see that there has been a documented record of the ways that consultation has benefitted the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan. I am therefore satisfied that the consultation process accords with the requirements of the Regulations.

Representations Received

Consultation on the submitted Plan, in accordance with Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 16, was undertaken by Harborough District Council from Wednesday 28th June to Wednesday 6th September 2017. I have been passed representations – 22 in total - received from the following:

- Mrs Margaret Wright
- Mr Anthony Bentley
- Mr Peter Beretta
- Mr John Coleman on behalf of the British Horse Society and the Leicestershire & Rutland Bridleways Association
- Mr Richard Lomas on behalf of the Co-op Dept 10108
- Ms Caroline Pick on behalf of the CPRE

- Mr Nick Wakefield on behalf of the Environment Agency
- Gladman Developments Ltd
- Mr Adrian Chadha on behalf of Highways England
- Mr Stephen Derry on behalf of Houghton Parish Council
- Mr John Moran on behalf of the HSE
- Mr Dennis Jacklin
- Mrs Linda Jacklin
- Ms Nik Green on behalf of Leicestershire County Council
- Mrs Leslie Street
- Natural England
- Mark Newman on behalf of the Houghton on the Hill C of E School
- Mr Peter Oldfield
- Andrew Hiorns Town Planning Ltd on behalf of Parker Strategic Land Ltd
- Mr Geoffrey Thomas
- Prof Alan Wells on behalf of the Ad Hoc Winckley Close Residents Group
- Ms Sarah Taylor on behalf of Wm Davis Ltd.

The Neighbourhood Plan

The Houghton Parish Council is to be congratulated on its extensive efforts to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for their area that will guide development activity over the period to 2031. I can see that a sustained effort has been put into the dialogue with the local community to arrive at actions and policies that can help to ensure that “in 15 years’ time Houghton on the Hill will continue to be a neighbourly, rural community. It will value its community spirit and sense of belonging and provide people with a safe, sustainable environment. It will continue to be a friendly, stimulating and vibrant place.” The Plan document is well presented with a combination of images and text that is engaging for the reader and, subject to the specific points that I make below, set out in appropriate and clearly themed sections. The Plan has generally been kept to a manageable length by not overextending the potential subject matter and the coverage of that.

The wording of content & Policies is not always as well-expressed as one might wish, but that is not uncommon in a community-prepared planning document and something that can readily be addressed. It is an expectation of Neighbourhood Plans that they should address the issues that are identified through community consultation, set within the context of higher level planning policies. There is no prescribed content and no requirement that the robustness of proposals should be tested to the extent prescribed for Local Plans. Where there has been a failure by the Qualifying Body to address an issue in the round, leading to an inadequate statement of Policy, it is part of my role wherever possible to see that the community’s intent is sustained in an appropriately modified wording for the policy. It is evident that the community has made positive use of “direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area” (PPG paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 41-001-20140306). It is evident that the Qualifying Body understands and has addressed the requirement for sustainable development.

Having considered all the evidence and representations submitted as part of the Examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It works from a positive vision for the future of the Neighbourhood Area and promotes policies that are proportionate and, subject to some amendment, sustainable. The Plan sets out the community needs it will meet whilst safeguarding Houghton on the Hill’s distinctive features and character. The plan-making had to find ways to reconcile the external challenges that are perceived as likely to affect the area with the positive Vision agreed with the community. All such difficult tasks were approached with transparency and care, with input as required and support from partners and Harborough District Council.

However, in the writing up of the work into the Plan document, it is often the case that the phraseology is imprecise, not helpful, or it falls short in justifying aspects of the selected policy, and I have been obliged to recommend modifications so as to ensure both clarity and meeting of the ‘Basic Conditions’. In particular, Plan policies as submitted may not meet the obligation to “provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency” (NPPF para 17). I bring this particular reference to the fore because it will be evident as I examine the policies individually and consider whether they meet or can meet the ‘Basic Conditions’.

Basic Conditions

The Independent Examiner is required to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the “Basic Conditions”, as set out in law following the Localism Act 2011. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the Plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;

- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- be compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has very helpfully set out to address the issues in the same order as above and, where appropriate, has tabulated in Appendices the relationship between the policy content of the Plan and its higher tier equivalents.

I have examined and will below consider the Neighbourhood Plan against all of the Basic Conditions above, utilising the supporting material provided in the Conditions Statement and other available evidence as appropriate.

The Plan in Detail

I will address the aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan content that are relevant to the Examination in the same sequence as the Plan. Recommendations are identified with a bold heading and italics and I have brought them together as a list at the end of the Report.

Front cover

A neighbourhood plan must specify the period during which it is to have effect. I note that there is a clear reference to the period 2017 – 2031 on the front cover.

1. Executive Summary

The Summary needs to be reviewed in the light of changes made as a result of my recommendations. In particular the following corrections are needed:

Recommendation 1:

In the Executive Summary the appropriate word in the detailing of Objective 1 is not “coherence” but ‘cohesion’.

It is more appropriate to say, in the fourth paragraph, that the objectives will be ‘addressed’ rather than “achieved” through the Plan policies.

The number and distribution of policies has been significantly reduced and altered by the recommendations and the listing must therefore be re-tallied to the content.

Since there are extensive content changes and it is difficult to summarise the detailed content fairly, paragraph five should be deleted.

Since I will later conclude that the purpose of the VDS is to provide ‘guidance’, all references to it should be consistently to that effect and the bottom paragraph on page 4 should be reworded as follows: ‘A detailed Village Design Statement (VDS) provides guidance on the local layout and construction details to which all development proposals should have regard.’

2. Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan

2.1 Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Area Designation

2.1.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Area

As there is no 2.2 in this section the numbering can be simplified to just one tier of numbering 2.1 – 2.3. As correctly noted in the 2.1 title, the formal designation by Harborough District Council is of a ‘Neighbourhood Area’ not a “Neighbourhood Development Plan Area”; therefore all references in the text and titling of the map need to be corrected. Additionally the text suggests that the Parish Boundaries are shown in purple whereas (as noted in a representation) the map does not show these boundaries; for clarity the unnecessary Parish boundaries can be omitted.

Recommendation 2:

Delete title 2.1.1 and renumber the subsequent parts of section 2 as 2.2 and 2.3.

In the text of para 2.1 and Fig 2.1 amend all references to Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Plan or Plan Area to read 'Neighbourhood Area'.

Delete the third sentence in the text of para 2.1 which reads: 'The parish boundaries are shown in the figure in purple'.

2.1.2 [now 2.2] The Qualifying Body

For clarity the text of paragraph 2.2 needs to show that it is the Parish Council and not the Working Party that is the Qualifying Body.

Recommendation 3:

Amend the opening of para 2.2 to say 'Houghton Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body, established ...'

2.1.3 [now 2.3] Neighbourhood Area Profile

This section would appear to be less of an "Area Profile" and more of a brief taster for the key issues that are detailed in the very next section. I believe it would be helpful to promote the reference to the Harborough DC Settlement Profile (only obliquely mentioned at the foot of the page) to the opening paragraph. In the introduction to the listing of "challenges" that follows I believe it would be more accurate to say that the NDP seeks to address 'some' of these since not all can be tackled directly by a land use Plan.

Recommendation 4:

Insert an additional sentence to the opening paragraph of the new 2.3 after the second sentence worded as: 'Harborough District Council compiled the detailed 'Settlement Profile: Houghton on the Hill (2015) as part of their work in preparing the emerging Local Plan; a link to the document is provided in the related Part II of the Plan (index shown in Appendix 3); amend the third sentence of para 2.3 to read: 'It also has challenges some of which the NDP seeks to address: ...'; delete the final paragraph on page 6.

3. Community Vision, Key Issues & Objectives**3.1 The Houghton Vision Statement****3.2 Houghton Community Key Issues**

The references within the first paragraph to Part II are confusing and should be simplified.

Recommendation 5:

In the opening paragraph of section 3.2 amend and reduce the final two sentences to: 'Questionnaire analysis is provided in Part II of the Plan and hyperlinks to the relevant parts of that analysis are included below for convenience.'

3.2.3 Housing Provision

Bullet points 1 & 2 have been overtaken by events and must be reworded to set out, briefly, the current position in a way that is consistent with the housing policy content later. Bullet point 3 implies that all of the "guidelines" within the VDS are applicable to every development, which is not the case and therefore some rewording is required.

Recommendation 6:

Reword the three bullet points as follows:

- The Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) published in January 2017 updated the housing requirement

for Harborough District and, from that, Local Plan trajectories for Houghton as a rural centre suggest a minimum of 152 new dwellings over the Plan period to 2031;

- During the preparation of this Plan planning consents for a total of 135 dwellings have been granted; the final Plan is therefore no longer intent on identifying significant sites;
- All development will need to show appropriate regard for the guidance in the Village Design Statement (VDS) in Appendix 1’.

3.2.5 Environment

Since the Neighbourhood Plan is not required to “conform” to the NPPF but rather to ‘have regard’ to it, some rewording of the opening sentence to paragraph 3.2.5 is required.

Recommendation 7:

Reword the opening sentence to para 3.2.5 to read: ‘Guided by the NDP Vision Statement, the Harborough District Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), the Plan aims for the environment are:’

3.2.6 Services and Facilities

The final part of the last bullet point – about the level of services – reads rather like an instruction to new residents rather than a reasoned expectation, and so for clarity should be reworded.

Recommendation 8:

In the final bullet point of 3.2.6 replace “...and new developments will be expected to support such facilities proportionately” with ‘and new developments will help to provide new customers’.

3.3 Houghton Neighbourhood Development Plan Objectives

As noted earlier, the appropriate word in the detailing of Objective 1 is not “coherence” but ‘cohesion’. As also noted earlier regarding the VDS, the wording in Objective 9 is not appropriate for the nature of the document as guidance.

Recommendation 9:

In para 3.3 the appropriate word in the detailing of Objective 1 is not “coherence” but ‘cohesion’ and Objective 9 should be reworded to read: ‘To conserve the built heritage of the village by ensuring that all new development and any alterations to existing buildings are sensitive to their setting and have appropriate regard for the guidance in the Village Design Statement (VDS).’

4. The Policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

4.1 Houghton Village Design Statement - Summary

Fig 4-1 is referenced in the text as defining the Conservation Area and therefore, to avoid any confusion, that is solely what it should do.

Recommendation 10:

Amend Fig 4-1 simply to define the Conservation Area and no other content; amend the title to: ‘Map of the existing village showing the Conservation Area’; amend the List of Figures accordingly.

Unlike other sections the paragraph numbering has been dropped for section 4, making it difficult to refer to specific content and without these the bullet point lists are undifferentiated. I don’t believe that a “development” can “adhere” to “duties”; sentence 2 in the first bullet point on page 11 therefore needs rewording. Bullet point two defines the purpose of Policy D1 but it need not duplicate the content.

Recommendation 11:

Add paragraph references to the text between Policies: 4.1.1 – 4.1.4.

*Rewrite the opening of sentence 2 in the first bullet point on page 11 to read:
'All development proposals will have to address the relevant statutory obligations.....'*

*Rewrite bullet point 2 on page 11 to read:
'In addition Policy D1 ensures that local guidance is specified within the Plan.'*

Policy D1: Protecting the Heritage of Houghton by Management of the Conservation Area

The Policy title here is misleading since the Policy does not (and cannot) extend to the "Management" of the Conservation Area and not all of Houghton's heritage assets are confined within the Conservation Area; therefore a relevant title is required. Since the Objective quoted is not part of the Policy it should be omitted from the Policy box; it would be more appropriate to add these cross-references immediately below each Policy box in the format: 'Related Objective: 9'. The Policy itself cannot be more draconian than the statutory obligations; in particular, since planning permission decisions must weigh up a number of relevant factors, no single one will always outweigh the others in the way the last sentence of Policy D1 implies.

Recommendations 12 & 13:

For all Policy Boxes: move the "(see Objective ..)" reference from inside to outside the Policy box and perhaps reword as: 'Related Objective: ..'.

Retitle Policy D1 to read: 'Sustaining the Character of the Conservation Area'.

*Rewrite Policy D1 to read:
'Any proposed developments or changes to existing buildings within the Conservation Area must have appropriate regard for the VDS, in particular the section 'Building in the Conservation Area (see Appendix 1).'*

As reworded Policy D1 meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy D2: Preserving the Essential Character of Houghton Outside the Conservation Area

A representation suggests that this Policy "cannot be realised if you increase the housing stock by 35% as now envisaged". I believe that is too pessimistic but certainly "preserving" is an over-strong word to use because it begins to imply no change and obligations greater than or at least as strong as for the Conservation Area. Other aspects of the wording within the Policy are also problematic: "these examples" is a vague reference given that Houghton is valued for its "non-uniformity of layouts"; applying the criteria "not negatively impact on the much valued views from the village" involves a highly subjective assessment upon which the proposer and the decision taker may be unlikely to adopt the same approach. As noted earlier, Plan policies must "provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency" (NPPF para 17).

Recommendation 14:

Retitle Policy D2 to read: 'Sustaining the Character of Houghton outside the Conservation Area'.

*Rewrite Policy D2 after the second sentence to read:
'Development proposals must have appropriate regard for the content of the VDS so as to sustain the essential character and avoid the urbanisation of Houghton.'*

New additions to or alterations of farmsteads and agricultural buildings beyond the village should respect their rural setting and must have appropriate regard for the content of the VDS, in particular the section relating to new construction or alterations of existing buildings beyond the village (see Appendix 1).'

As partly reworded Policy D2 meets the Basic Conditions.

In the text paragraph that follows Policy D2 – now numbered 4.1.3 – the format (in my copy at least) has gone awry and needs correcting. The opening sentence continues to overstate the nature of the VDS and should be omitted as it adds nothing in context.

Recommendation 15:

Delete the opening sentence of [the newly numbered] para 4.1.3. Reword sentence 2 as the introduction to the bullet points to read: 'The design guidance in the VDS helps to ensure that the much-loved rural aspect of the village is sustained.'

Ensure that the two only bullet points that follow the introduction are correctly formatted.

Policy D3: Preserving, and Ensuring the Provision of, Green Space within Houghton

As noted above “preserving” is an over-strong word to use in the title, not least because the use of green spaces is likely to adapt and change over time. Also, within the Policy, saying “should be” seems to be a wish rather than a statement of policy. A representation also seeks further clarity: “the policy is a bit vague and only talks about protection – which might mean fencing, etc?” As Figure 4-7 identifies the open spaces to be recognised then that needs to be referenced *within* the Policy but the Figure should be relocated and renumbered so that it is adjacent or close to the point of reference.

Recommendation 16:

Retitle Policy D3 to read: 'Sustaining the Rural Character of Houghton through the use of Open Spaces'.

Rewrite Policy D3 to read:

'Incidental green spaces, as identified in Figure 4-2, are an essential part of the rural character of Houghton as is recognised within the VDS. Development proposals within the village must ensure that this green aspect is sustained by incorporating new green spaces and having appropriate regard for the related VDS guidance (Appendix 1).'

Relocate and renumber Fig. 4-7 as 4-2 and renumber subsequent Figures and their references accordingly. Delete from the title of the new Fig. 4-2 all wording other than 'Green Spaces in Houghton'.

Amend the Figure reference in the first bullet point in the text that follows this Policy and delete the second bullet point as the related VDS content has been altered (see later recommendations).

As reworded Policy D3 meets the Basic Conditions.

4.2 Housing Provision

Given that both the context for and the planning consents position for new housing in the Parish have substantially changed, even since the Plan was submitted, and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of content (eg both Policy H2 and Policy H7 include the same provision for accessible housing), section 4.2 must be given a major overhaul. Several representations including one from the Parish Council have noted the areas of discrepancy that have arisen and drawn attention to the publication of the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) in January 2017.

To encompass the same policy intent as the submitted Plan whilst bringing the content up-to-date, without duplication, the following approach is needed:

- an introductory paragraph should set the current context for the housing content,
- a policy should define new, extended 'Limits to Development' whilst having regard for the new policy approach that is included within the emerging Local Plan,
- a single policy can address the particular concern for specialist housing.

After addressing this issue I will then consider each of the original Plan policies in turn.

Recommendation 17:

Replace the two line preamble for Section 4.2 with:

'The Neighbourhood Plan has been overtaken by events in relation to its intent to allocate land for additional housing. Three sites, shown on Figure 4-3 as sites 1, 2 & Z, have planning consents for a total of 135 dwellings. The Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) published in January 2017 updated the housing requirement for Harborough District and, from that, Local Plan trajectories for Houghton as a rural centre suggest a minimum of 152 new dwellings over the Plan period to 2031; therefore there is a small balance of a minimum of 17 dwellings yet to be met. There is a preference for this additional housing to be provided within the existing built-up area (delineated in the Harborough Core Strategy as the 'Limits to Development') but, in line with best practice, the Plan accommodates the potential for assessed housing demand to increase in the emerging Local Plan or subsequent documents. The community has indicated a strong preference for any additional housing requirement to be accommodated to the north of the A47 and therefore the boundary of the reviewed and extended Limits to Development (shown in Figure 4-3) encompasses, at that location, land for future expansion.'

Add a replacement Policy H1: General Housing Provision

'Housing development within the Houghton Limits to Development, as delineated in Figure 4-3, will be supported provided that each proposal addresses the following criteria:

- a) it does not, cumulatively with other proposals, significantly exceed the target for the delivery of new homes in Houghton set from time to time by the Local Planning Authority; and*
- b) it reflects the size of the current settlement, its road infrastructure and its level of service provision; and*
- c) it is physically and visually connected to and respects the form and character of the existing settlement; and*
- d) safe and convenient access is provided for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians; and*
- e) the mix of dwellings proposed is informed by up to date evidence of housing need; and*
- f) affordable housing is provided where required by the policies of the Local Planning Authority and, where provided, this is fully integrated within the development; and*
- g) appropriate regard is demonstrated for the other relevant Policies within this Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Amend and renumber (as per recommendation 16) Figure 4-2 as 4-3 and relocate to be adjacent to the new Policy H1; omit from the Figure the SHLAA sites and the outline of the Conservation Area but instead show the boundary of the extended Limits to Development, as derived from the Harborough Core Strategy but extended to include Sites 1 & Z and also the area known as Site 3 (but this should not be identified as such as explained later); retitle as: 'Map showing consented housing sites and the boundary of the Houghton Limits to Development'; amend the List of Figures accordingly.

Add a paragraph of justification following the Policy as follows:

'The extended boundary of the Limits to Development incorporates the 2 consented developments that are beyond the boundary shown in the Harborough Core Strategy as well as additional land to the north of the A47 that is contiguous with the existing settlement boundary and defined in the HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment (2016) as 'Medium', as shown in Figure 4-4 (there are no locations within the Plan area identified lower on the landscape scale i.e. where the visual intrusion would be low and hence there would be a higher capacity for development).

Policy GD2 in the emerging Harborough Local Plan will permit new housing provided that, inter alia, "it does not, cumulatively with other proposals, significantly exceed the [specified] target for the delivery of new homes in the Rural Centres and Selected Rural Villages".

National Planning Practice Guidance (ref: 41-009-20160211) says: "Neighbourhood plans should consider allocating reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed. This can help minimise potential conflicts and ensure that policies in the neighbourhood plan are not overridden by a new Local Plan".

The Housing & Planning Act 2016 defines Affordable Housing as including rental, shared ownership and starter homes.

Midlands Rural Housing produced a detailed investigation into the housing needs of Houghton on the Hill for HDC and identified a need for 11 open market homes and 14 affordable rented homes in Houghton over the next 5 years for people with a local connection (Midlands Rural Housing: A Detailed Investigation into the Housing Needs of Houghton on the Hill, September 2015). A number of indicators of current local housing requirements emerged from the community responses to Q8 and Q12 in Housing and Use of Land. Whilst not required to rank their responses, respondents consistently selected bungalows and houses in almost equal measure and showed preference for 2 and 3 bedroom properties, which is in line with the Harborough District Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2017). Evidence comes from both the number of ticks awarded to each category and the additional comments expressed by respondents.'

Amend and renumber (as per recommendation 16) Figure 4-3 as 4-4 and relocate it close to the new reference as above; omit references to any of the individual housing sites (for clarity) but instead superimpose the extended Limits to Development on the HDC Landscape Values map; retitle as: 'Extended Limits to Development superimposed on the HDC Landscape Capacity values'; amend the List of Figures accordingly.

The new Policy H1 meets the Basic Conditions.

I note here that the Qualifying Body, in their response to my queries, did suggest extending the Limits to Development slightly further west than the present extent of Site 1; however, as this proposal was not part of the Plan submitted for public consultation it would be inappropriate for me to recommend its incorporation within the boundary.

Policy H1: General Housing Provision

It is questionable whether the Policy H1 included within the submitted Plan provides "a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency" (NPPF para 17). Further a representation points out that "Without any viability assessment ... the policy ... conflicts with paragraph 173 of the NPPF which notes that careful attention should be paid to viability in plan making to ensure that policies do not threaten the viability of development". It must be remembered also that all the related provisions within the NPPF and the Harborough Core Strategy will continue to

apply and therefore repetition of such content with different or abbreviated wording is liable to cause confusion and difficulties for decision-makers.

Bullet point a) merely says in fewer words what Policies D1 & D2 had already said. Point b) is significantly less positive than the related obligations in the NPPF (amongst the 12 Core Planning Principles is: “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”) and less specific than Core Strategy Policy CS11. Point c), whilst specific about the streets of concern, fails to illuminate what “minimises” might amount to or entail; a representation comments: “the term ‘minimises’ is difficult to judge and is inconsistent with the NPPF that states (para 32) that ‘Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe’”. Point d) notes a duplication or overlap with Policy E3 and certainly says much the same as Core Strategy Policy CS5 (d). Point e) repeats what was said in the introduction to the Policy and the Policies referred to are themselves an integral part of the Plan. Point f) says “Policies will ensure....” but it is most unclear how this part of Policy H1 might ensure that demand and supply are sustained in tandem; it would appear that this part of the Policy is intended to be an equivalent to Policy GD2 (a) in the emerging Local Plan. Point g), even at the scale of a Neighbourhood Plan, is too specific given that the characteristics of sites and their locations will vary and, over time, requirements and what people can afford can alter significantly; a representation comments that that g) provides “a very prescriptive mix of house types ...[which] is inflexible and overly restrictive and could, in its current form act to restrict sustainable development opportunities from coming forward”; another representation adds: “It is for the Plan at this stage to set out the evidence to support this policy rather than to set the requirement and then to require schemes to justify a departure – the Plan should lead”; whilst there is a subsequent acknowledgement in the text of the role of the Council’s Housing Enabling and Community Infrastructure Officer, this Policy fails to action that acknowledgement. Point h) might but does not cross-refer to the Harborough District Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document 2017 regarding affordable housing obligations; however, this issue too is more appropriately addressed site by site; the NPPF provides the definition of ‘affordable housing’ and it does not extend the special consideration for bungalows that is included in the Policy but not justified in the text. Point i) merely cross refers to a Policy which itself is an integral part of the Plan.

All in all therefore there is little of substance behind Policy H1 and the policy concerns are now addressed in the new Policy H1.

Two (related) representations suggest that the “Community Questionnaire results were inherently skewed because only 70 ... of the 641 residences are situated North of the A47. Naturally responses stated a preference for development as far away from their homes as possible”. The comment rather fails to acknowledge that there were many opportunities to publicise and debate the benefits and disbenefits of all potential site locations; in reality the most significant skewing factor is likely to have been the actions of developers pressing ahead with proposals prior to the completion of the work on the Plan, leaving some options as inevitable. Since in broad terms all the sites under consideration were considered to have the potential to be ‘sustainable’ options, it was always likely that community choices would turn on finer details.

The same representations note that Policy H1 mentions “safe and suitable access and connectivity between adjacent sites and the rest of the village”. “How can this possible be achieved if all development is to be situated north of the A47 with a daily traffic flow between 9,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day?” the representations ask. But this is not an issue that is unique to Houghton and there is much positive experience, doubtless a good deal within Leicestershire, to be drawn from.

Recommendation 18:

Delete the existing Policy H1 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above.

4.2.1 Affordable Housing

Having here noted that the definition of 'affordable housing' has changed and broadened, it is unfortunate that the 2015 document identifying Houghton's needs pre-dates this and addresses only 'affordable rental homes'. However, compared to the expected level of development across all homes, the numbers identified are small and readily manageable and so the text that seeks to draw distinctions that imply, with dubious logic, that some elements of 'affordable housing' are more relevant to Houghton than others, may be drawing over-fine distinctions. A representation comments: "It is not acceptable for the Neighbourhood Plan to seek exemptions to meeting the needs of all households, both market and affordable, via the Neighbourhood Plan".

Policy H2: Accessible and Affordable Housing

I note that Policy H2 itself is silent on the type of numerical distinction included in the introductory text and it is right to conclude that the nature of housing demand will vary over time, as will the ability of builders to supply a mix of housing; it will invariably be most practical for the Plan policy to defer to the latest source of evidence. This is effectively the position adopted for the Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan and so the Neighbourhood Plan need not repeat the same general approach in a Policy.

The part of Policy H2 relating to accessible housing is a matter addressed again within Policy H7 but the justification is under para 4.2.2 and so I will deal with that below.

Recommendation 19:

Delete Policy H2 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above; renumber subsequent paragraphs.

4.2.2 Accessible Housing

It is wrong to assume that demand for wheelchair accessible housing is solely or largely related to the size of the elderly population. However, the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Employment Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) 2017 did identify a growing unmet need for wheelchair accessible housing. This has informed the emerging Local Plan requirement for 4% of homes on sites for over 100 homes to be built to the accessible and adaptable standard as laid out in Building Regulations, Part M, Category 2. A representation points out: "This policy [H2] requires [that] at least 7% of new dwellings are developed to meet Part M accessibility standards of the Building Regulations. The justification that follows does not appear to substantiate this figure with HEDNA apparently suggesting 4% across the housing market area. The NP identifies a figure of 10 dwellings which it states is 5% but the policy then specifies 7%, which equates to 11 dwellings". The viability implications of the 4% requirement have been fully tested through the Harborough Local Plan Viability Assessment. Given that no proportionate assessment of the viability implications has been presented for either of the higher percentages that are here proposed and that none of the housing sites for the Parish is likely to exceed 100 homes, I cannot conclude that the more demanding Policy (included within Policies H2 & H7) has been appropriately justified. The best that can be achieved is the encouragement that is at the heart of Policy H7 (see below).

Recommendation 20:

Delete para 4.2.2 and renumber subsequent paragraphs.

Policy H3: Housing Site Allocations**Policy H4: Development of Site 1****Policy H5: Development of Site 2**

As acknowledged in representations, these allocation Policies have been significantly overtaken by events; having addressed the sites and any related issues within the new Policy H1 above, Policies H3, H4 & H5 should be deleted.

Recommendation 21:

Delete Policies H3, H4 & H5 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above.

Policy H6: Development of Site 3

Within the Plan document Site 3 is treated unsatisfactorily; it is defined as a “Qualified Reserve Site” within Policy H3 and allocated via Policy H6 subject to Policy H3 and constrained to commence “no earlier than 2025”. The text notes that there may be issues around a suitable access to the site although the representation from the land owner suggests that there is no reason to view the site as other than available for immediate development. As noted in representations there is no specific justification for the selection of a start date beyond 2025, other than underlying presumptions that there will already be a substantial amount of construction activity in that location and housing requirements will not have increased to justify the development of a site of this size; 2025 is a somewhat random date that may well become redundant once the emerging Local Plan reaches adoption. Evidently the planning approval for 48 dwellings on land to the west of Houghton (identified as site Z) has significantly undercut the justification for Site 3 as a single entity. Accordingly, the area identified as ‘Site 3’ has been incorporated within the extended Limits to Development in the new Policy H1 above. I have concluded that this is the appropriate way for the land to be considered in the Plan; it might be used either in part (perhaps against the specialist housing requirement in Policy H7) or in stages as new assessments of need are made. Acknowledging these possibilities it would be inappropriate to retain the single entity title of ‘Site 3’ for this land.

Recommendation 22:

Delete Policy H6 and the supporting text.

A representation comments: “the land owned by the Co-op north of Stretton Lane should be allocated for housing purposes in the Neighbourhood Plan. As Figure 4-3 of the NP confirms, the Co-op land is assessed as having the same Landscape Capacity (medium) as the three sites allocated for housing the NP. Therefore, landscape impact alone is not a tenable reason to resist future residential development on the land north of Stretton Lane. Additionally, the allocation of this site could facilitate the relocation of some Community Allotment space, as referred to under Policy S3 (Provision of Allotments) of the Draft NP.” My role as Examiner does not extend to considering the merits or otherwise of potential sites beyond those justified and identified in the Plan itself. The outcomes from the public consultations have been openly and clearly presented and I have concluded that in the policies related to the identification of land, as amended, the Basic Conditions have been met; additionally the Plan includes a commitment (section 5) to keep the context for the Plan under review and to revisit the Plan should there be indications that new or additional actions are required.

Policy H7: Provision of Dwellings for People in Later Life or Having Mobility Issues

The Policy as written is insistent that it relates solely to “sites already allocated for housing development” but its potential has been severely diminished by the permissions already granted. However, it would also be feasible to provide the facilities sought through suitable conversion or redevelopment. The part of the Policy addressing accessible housing is a repeat of part of Policy H2 and has been addressed earlier. A representation adds: “by being

overly prescriptive, the policy [H7] may discourage otherwise acceptable developments that can meet the village's and wider community's needs". Therefore the Policy needs rewording with a clearer focus.

Recommendation 23:

Renumber Policy H7 as Policy H2; retitle the Policy as: 'Specialist Housing for People in Later Life'; reword the Policy as follows:

'Development proposals that comprise or include housing specifically designed for people in their later years, which might include bungalows, sheltered housing and residential care, will be supported provided that each proposal addresses the following criteria:

- a) it is sited within the Houghton Limits to Development; and*
- b) its size and configuration are justified by a detailed assessment of the special housing needs to be met; and*
- c) where appropriate, both open market and affordable housing are included; and*
- d) where appropriate, some dwellings designed to the whole-life standard are included; and*
- e) if the reuse or redevelopment of existing buildings are involved, the demands of integrating the new use within the existing built form are addressed; and*
- f) appropriate regard is demonstrated for the other relevant Policies within this Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Amend the supporting text to remove from sentence four the words "... as already mentioned in the narrative supporting Policy H4"; omit from the supporting table the last line (which relates to "wheelchair access and mobility").

As reworded and renumbered Policy H2 meets the Basic Conditions.

4.3 Services and Facilities

Policy S1: Retention and Enhancement of Key Services and Facilities

The text does not accurately follow the title; "key services" are in the title and explained in the supporting text but the policy text omits the word 'key'. The title and policy text both refer to "facilities" which the supporting text rather implies are the listed "commercial services", as they are titled in Appendix 2; but it is puzzling that there is no reference here to Appendix 2 and no mention of the detailing there of what would normally be termed 'facilities' – the Village Hall and the sports & recreation grounds (the burial ground would not be open to development in the normal way). The Policy needs to be clear if it is to provide that "practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency" (NPPF para 17).

Recommendation 24:

Reword Policy S1 as:

'Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing services that are key to Houghton's role as a Rural Centre – specifically the food shop, the post office, the primary school and the public houses – or the loss of key facilities – specifically the Village Hall and the sports and recreation grounds – will only be supported if it can be robustly demonstrated that the relevant service or facility is:

- no longer required, or*
- no longer viable, or*
- being replaced within the development proposal by a new or improved service or facility that is equivalent or better in terms of quality, quantity and location.'*

Replace the final sentence of the text below the Policy starting: "It does however have...." with: 'Appendix 2 provides more details on Houghton's key services and facilities and their value to the community.'

As reworded Policy S1 meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy S2 – Infrastructure

As is set out in the emerging Local Plan paragraphs 11.1.4 – 11.1.12, arrangements for developer funding contributions are more complex and constrained – especially around viability – than is implied by this Policy. The Council’s Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document published in January 2017 provides a comprehensive picture of the demanding current local framework. If the Council adopts the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – it has suggested that this may happen in conjunction with the new Local Plan - and this Neighbourhood Plan is accepted by a majority at its referendum, then the Parish will be entitled to 25% of any CIL payments arising from developments within the Parish to spend on local infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, in the absence of the kind of compelling evidence that is required, usually site-by-site, the Policy can only take the form of a request rather than an obligation.

Recommendation 25:

Reword Policy S2 as:

‘Development proposals should consider, assess and address their impact on and potential to benefit:

- a) local traffic congestion and existing on-street and off-street parking problems, particularly those associated with the Primary School and other community buildings, and*
- b) pedestrian and cycle movement, and*
- c) village community facilities and in particular their value in helping new community members to settle.*

As reworded Policy S2 meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy S3 – Provision of Allotments

As worded this is not a Policy; it is effectively a record of the current position but sits within a 14 year Plan. Had a site been identified then the Plan may have allocated the site for allotment use but, as the position is unresolved, there is no development policy commitment to be made. I will return later to the content here in relation to its incompatibility with the apparent intent to ‘protect’ the allotment site.

Recommendation 26:

Delete Policy S3, its supporting text and Fig. 4.4 or remove them to sit within the Community Projects; adjust subsequent Policy and Figure numbers accordingly.

Policy S4 – Retail and Employment

There is a significant mismatch between the broad sweep of Policy S4 and the supporting text. The latter says (my emphasis in italics): “any demand-led transition of *existing buildings* to retail activities which might strengthen the local economy and provide local employment opportunities is to be encouraged”. There is also a divergence from the related Core Strategy Policy CS 17 which says, *inter alia*, that outside of rural centres “Only development required for the purposes of agriculture, woodland management, sport and recreation, local food initiatives, support visits to the District and renewable energy production will be appropriate”. Furthermore, the bases for assessing the “sustainability” criteria are undefined and therefore the required “practical framework” is absent.

Since the Core Strategy (and the emerging Local Plan) already provides encouragement for the types of development identified here but in a more balanced and nuanced manner, I cannot see that there is anything specifically local that (has been justified and) has been added.

Recommendation 27:

Delete Policy S4 and its supporting text; adjust subsequent Policy numbers accordingly.

Policy S5 – Provision of High-Speed Broadband

As expressed here, this is not clearly a land use issue and developers might reasonably argue that they are entirely reliant on the broadband service providers to meet the obligation in most cases. However I note that the emerging Local Plan includes and justifies within Policy IN3 a set of obligations for broadband and related services in “major developments” the definition of which follows the NPPF ie a planning application for more than 10 dwellings or site over 0.5 ha. The Neighbourhood Plan might therefore adopt the standard in advance of the Local Plan adoption.

Recommendation 28:

Rewrite Policy S5 as:

‘Major developments of more than 10 dwellings or over 0.5 ha must ensure that adequate broadband services are available to all residents and/or users of the development. Development proposals should incorporate a bespoke duct network, designed and implemented in cooperation with a recognised network provider, and where viable, a fibre to the premises (FTTP) solution. Other forms of infrastructure, such as facilities supporting mobile broadband and Wi-Fi, should be included in major developments and designed in a sympathetic and appropriate way in order to reflect the character of the surrounding area.’

As reworded Policy S5 meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy S6 – Construction of a Golf Course

The Policy here is problematic because it falls short of allocating the site for the purposes of a golf course and it could not do this without providing proportionate evidence that might support such an allocation. A case will have to be made out when a planning proposal is submitted but, in the absence of a justified proposal along with the awkward fact that the presumed site extends beyond the jurisdiction of the Neighbourhood Plan, I cannot see a basis for the inclusion of a Policy. A representation has pointed out that a portion of the land of the proposed golf course lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3 and a sequential test would be required to be able to conclude that the indicated site is the most appropriate one available. Should a proposal come forward then that would be obliged to have regard to the Village Design Statement and related issues through Policy D2. The representation from the proposers of the golf course notes that “Policies within the [emerging] Local Plan provide for the golf course” and therefore that may be the more appropriate place for the site allocation to be made.

Recommendation 29:

Delete Policy S6, its supporting text and Fig. 4.5; adjust subsequent Figure numbers accordingly.

4.4 Traffic and Transport

4.4.1 Traffic Management

Generally traffic “management” is not a land use issue. Policy T2 for instance may well be an important project to include within the Community Projects but a wish is not a policy; this applies also to the second part of Policy T4. Policy T1 also illustrates another dilemma, that of defining matters of degree; how will “significant increase” and its causation objectively be assessed? “Perceptions” can sometimes be misleading and may not be borne out by evidence and a context for that evidence. Had assessment work progressed further then Policy T4 could have made a positive contribution to parking issues by allocating a site for an additional car park, but in the absence of that there is continuing lack of clarity.

Policy T1: Traffic Management

As noted above, I cannot see that this Policy can provide a “practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency” (NPPF para 17) and I cannot see that it adds anything of significance to Policy S2 as reworded. Accordingly I cannot conclude that Policy T1 can meet the Basic Conditions and its policy value is dubious.

Recommendation 30:

Delete Policy T1 and the preamble to it.

Policy T2: Traffic Management along the A47

There is no content here that amounts to a land use policy. Whilst I appreciate that there may be a wish to retain the text content to record community concerns, this can cross-refer to the content of Policy T2 as transferred to the Community Projects section.

Recommendation 31:

Transfer the content of Policy T2 to the section on Community Projects and within the related Plan text add a cross-reference to the commitment within the Community Projects; delete the final two text paragraphs on p. 28 as the context for them has changed.

4.4.2 Parking

Policy T3: Parking in New Developments and when Alterations are Made to Existing Premises

The 6Cs Design Guide is very aware of and addresses the issues of on-street parking. To the extent that Policy T3 repeats existing requirements, differences of wording and abbreviation of content (eg omitting the distinction between sites of up to and above 5 dwellings) there is potential for confusion. To the extent that Policy T3 extends current requirements, no justification is provided for any additional requirement or their cumulative impact on viability; the related explanatory text is largely limited to non-residential parking issues. Accordingly I cannot conclude that Policy T3 can meet the Basic Conditions and its policy value is dubious.

Recommendation 32:

Delete Policy T3 and the related text.

Policy T4: Public Parking Areas within the Village

As with Policy T1 the Policy T4 does not provide a “practical framework” and I cannot see that it adds anything of significance to Policy S2 as reworded. Accordingly I cannot conclude that Policy T4 can meet the Basic Conditions. The nature of the proposition in Policy T4 and in particular the second paragraph is of the nature of a Community Project and accordingly the content should be transferred.

Recommendation 33:

Transfer the content of Policy T4 and the related text including Table 1 to the section on Community Projects.

4.5 Buses

This section records a position at the date of Plan submission that, at least in part, will become quickly out of date. However, as it establishes the significance to the community of a public transport connection I am not proposing that it should be altered.

4.6 Environment

Policy E1: Maintenance and Development of Green Spaces

I cannot see that Policy E1 adds anything of significance to Policy D3 as reworded; in fact there is potential for confusion since it seems to give greater prominence to matters other than the VDS which is the core reference in Policy D3.

Recommendation 34:

Delete Policy E1 and its related text (Fig 4-7 has already been removed to earlier in the Plan alongside Policy D3); renumber subsequent Policies accordingly.

Policy E2: Conservation of Habitats and Biodiversity

Whilst the thrust of this Policy has national and Core Strategy support there is very little local detail added here; existing wildlife corridors are not mapped nor is their coherence established. The County Council's representation notes that "Each Neighbourhood Plan should consider the impact of potential development on enhancing biodiversity and habitat connectivity such as hedgerows and greenways". Accordingly the Policy is valued but, even when reworded in a policy form, Policy E2 remains nebulous. Encouragement to landowners, as included in the present wording of the Policy, is not a land use matter but may be another item to be included within the Community Projects.

Recommendation 35:

Reword Policy E2 as follows:

'The Neighbourhood Area supports a range of protected and vulnerable species and development proposals should address, with mitigation where appropriate, their impact on these and related habitats. Positive measures to sustain wildlife in Houghton would include the provision or alignment of interconnected open spaces in the form of corridors that would allow unrestricted wildlife movement into and within the settlement.'

As reworded Policy E2 meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy E3: Reducing the Use of Cars for Movements within the Village and the Wider Plan Area

This subject has already been addressed in other sections. The only land use element within Policy E3 is point (a) but that has already been included within Policy S2 as reworded. It is noted that some of the measures are already being addressed by the Parish Council and therefore the whole of this Policy and the related text should be subsumed within the Community Projects section.

Recommendation 36:

Transfer the content of Policy E3 and the related text to the section on Community Projects.

Policy E4: Maximising the Efficient Use of Water

Policy E5: Maximising the Use of Renewable Energy

Unfortunately these policies do not have appropriate regard for the Ministerial Planning Update Statement (March 2015 and the Deregulation Bill 2015) which requires that "local planning authorities and qualifying bodies preparing neighbourhood plans should not set in their emerging Local Plans, neighbourhood plans, or supplementary planning documents, any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings". Accordingly, to avoid any confusion, these Policies should be deleted. A representation reassures that "The Policy within the emerging Local Plan CC1 provides a framework against which to develop proposals to minimise impacts, but is not specific as to the methods or technologies".

Recommendation 37:

Delete Policies E4 & E5 and the related text.

5. Progress, Use and Maintenance of the Development Plan

To avoid confusion with the wider Development Plan for Harborough the title needs to be amended to refer to the 'Neighbourhood Plan' rather than the "Development Plan".

Much content here is date expired and needs editing.

Recommendation 38:

In the title of Section 5 (both within the Plan and the Content page) replace the word "Development" with 'Neighbourhood'.

Delete all the content in paras 1 – 5 so that the reduced content will start: 'Houghton Parish Council will maintain regular contact.....'; delete the heading 5.1.3. Amend the reference to periodic review in the final paragraph to say 'at least every 5 years' in place of "at intervals of about 5 years".

6. Community Projects to be Considered

As is required, the content that does not relate to the development and use of land has been separated out. Given that these are only "to be considered" and the Plan document is designed to be effective for up to 14 years, it would be more appropriate for the Community Projects section to be moved to a fourth Appendix. In the process of making this transfer the content that I have recommended be removed from the Plan itself can be incorporated (content from Policies S3, T2, T4 & E3). Conversely, the references to Policies T4 & E3 in paragraph 6.1.4 need to be removed. A representation from the British Horse Society and Leicestershire & Rutland Bridleways Association suggests other Projects content that might be considered since it would not be appropriate for the NDP.

Recommendation 39:

Remove section 6 to become a new Appendix 4; alter the Contents page accordingly. Incorporate as appropriate into the new Appendix 4 the content recommended for transfer from the Neighbourhood Plan document Policies T2, T4 & E3; remove references to Policies T4 & E3 from para 6.1.4.

Appendix 1 – Village Design Statement

It is important that both the content and the wording within the VDS have appropriate regard for the NPPF expectations:

"para 59: Local planning authorities [and by extension Qualifying Bodies for Neighbourhood Plans] should consider using design codes where they could help deliver high quality outcomes. However, design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.

para 60: Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness."

A representation adds: "The Parish Council should ensure that the design principles adhered to are not overly onerous to render development unviable".

There is some confusion in the various ways that the VDS content is described. In the first sentence the VDS says that it "does not aim to offer advice for the design of buildings"; however, sections 1.6 & 1.8 then proffer "Guidelines for the design of buildings". This seems to indicate some internal inconsistency but also, the language of the "Guidelines" - where for instance it says "will be permitted" and "will be expected to" - suggests over-

prescription. The use of appropriate wording is important to the weight that may be afforded to the guidance in planning decisions. The Qualifying Body has provided a paragraph outlining the purpose of the VDS and I believe that this would be worth including alongside several other amendments to ensure that guidance rather than prescription is consistently what is delivered.

Recommendation 40:

Amend the VDS as follows:

Add a new paragraph 2 under the heading “1.1 Introduction” as follows:

‘The guidance in this Statement recognises that developers will probably have a suite of designs they prefer to offer in particular locations and for a particular mix of different size of properties to achieve their objectives for the site, and also recognises that infill, minor development or redevelopment of existing buildings/structures may bring forward creative proposals. The guidance cannot and does not seek to affect those choices, but does seek to improve certain features without destroying the developer’s or the individual’s designs.’

In paragraph 2 under the heading “1.2 The village context” delete the stranded words “In the HDC Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study (2016)”.

In Table 1 the second column should be retitled: ‘Village Design Statement response’; at row A4 replace the word “discussed” with ‘addressed’; at row B7 replace the words “The development must” with ‘Development proposals should’.

At 1.6 amend the title to say: ‘Features to be considered in the design of buildings in new developments and for modifications to existing buildings’; in paragraph 1 delete the reference to the “Code for Sustainable Homes” (since this no longer provides a basis for national policy) and replace the last sentence with: ‘Although no dominant style exists which can be used as a reference for new developments, the following should be taken into account to encourage high quality outcomes both in design and in creating a better place to live which occupants and others in the village can be proud of’.

Within 1.6.1(c) replace the final two sentences with: ‘The use of flat roofs on new-build and on extensions to existing dwellings is discouraged unless their use preserves an established, attractive view of the countryside which might otherwise be lost’.

Within 1.6.1(e) delete the words “and this will be encouraged”.

Within 1.6.1(g) delete the words “should be permitted” and replace with ‘may benefit a design’.

Within 1.6.1(i) delete the sentence “The relationship of garages to the street scene must be a prime consideration in planning decisions” since it duplicates the paragraph opening.

Within 1.6.1(k) replace the words “will be expected to” in the final sentence with ‘are encouraged to’.

At 1.6.2 paragraph 5 replace “should be encouraged” with “are encouraged”; in the final paragraph reduce the final sentence to: ‘Existing trees along the boundary to a development should be retained wherever possible’.

At 1.6.3 paragraph 2 reduce the second sentence to: ‘This connection is important and should not be broken’; in paragraph 4 correct the first sentence to: ‘This is the particular strength which defines the character of the built village’; in paragraph 5 delete the confusing and repetitive third sentence commencing: “This consideration of changes....”.

Since “1.7 Key considerations” is actually a sub-section of 1.6.3, delete this sub-heading and renumber subsequent sections accordingly; in place of the subheading use ‘Key considerations’ as the opening words of a new paragraph; to make content easier to reference use numbered (a) – (f) (as used at 1.6.1) to identify the bullet points.

Under “Key considerations: in bullet point (a) delete sentences 1, 2 and 5 as these are not worded as guidance; in bullet point (c), for the same reason, delete the words “will be acceptable” and replace with ‘may be appropriate’; for the same reason in bullet point (e) delete the final sentence and correct the previous sentence to read ‘...proposed construction at an inappropriate scale....’

At 1.8 amend the title to say: ‘Aspects to be considered in the design of new constructions or re-development of existing buildings beyond the village’.

Under “1.8.1 Landscape impact” change the negative wording to positive guidance: in the second sentence replace the words “not impact negatively on” with ‘demonstrate appropriate regard for’; in the third sentence replace “not create a negative impact upon” with ‘show appropriate regard for’.

Under “1.8.2 Tall structures” ensure that the wording is positive guidance whilst having regard for the possibility that some matters may not require a planning consent: replace “will need to be assessed and agreed before approval is given” with ‘should be avoided wherever possible and, where essential, their siting must show careful regard for their impact’.

Section 1.9.1 expresses a frustration rather than design guidance and is therefore inappropriate content for a statutory document; delete section 1.9.1 and renumber the following section as ‘1.9 Street furniture’.

Under [as now numbered] “1.9 Street furniture” in the second sentence replace the words “must be encouraged” with “are encouraged”.

As reworded the VDS meets its stated purpose of providing guidance.

Appendix 2 – Houghton Services and Community Facilities

It is helpful that this Appendix notes the value attached to community services. A representation has pointed out an inaccuracy in the detail provided for the Primary School where it says (last sentence): "It is very likely that the school will convert to an academy school and become part of a Multi-Academy Trust in 2017" whereas that should now read ‘2018’. Another representation points out a typing error on page 59 paragraph 1.2.5 where the reference to “Annabella’s” ought to be ‘Annabella’.

Recommendation 41:

On p 54 of Appendix 2 in the last line of the page replace “2017” with ‘2018’.

On p 59 para 1.2.5 correct the name reference from “Annabella’s” to ‘Annabella’.

Recommendation 42:

Re-check the cross-references throughout the document to ensure they have been updated to the amended content and numberings.

Appendix 3 – Index of NDP Part II Evidence Base

The way that the content of Appendix 3 is set out now needs to be reviewed in the light of changes resulting from my recommendations; adding a section on the Community Projects would help to ensure that data references are retained even though content has been moved.

Recommendation 43:

Review the arrangement of Appendix 3 so that it aligns helpfully with the revised Plan content after the recommendations have been incorporated.

Other matters raised in representations

One representation urged that “the Plan [should] explicitly encourage the village’s demographic profile to become somewhat younger during the planning period”; I am not however persuaded that this would be possible through policies related to the development and use of land.

Another representation comments: “It is not a concise plan with too much emphasis on idealism, lacking logic”. I have noted instances where the Plan policies lack an essential justification but it is certainly appropriate for the Plan to set objectives that identify the issue where the community wants to see improvements over the Plan period. The representation asserts that “The NDP objectives are ... best achieved by restricting the size and pace of development in the next 15 years”; however, the local development plan, of which the NDP is a part, is obliged to address and respond to ‘objectively assessed housing need’ in order that everyone is adequately housed. Because of planning consents already granted, the NDP has ultimately only been required to address a very small future shortfall to match or exceed the currently assessed housing requirement to 2031. Collectively the sites will add approximately 210 dwellings in Houghton; the HDC document ‘Settlement Profile: Houghton on the Hill 2015’ records that there were 641 dwellings in Houghton according to the 2011 Census and one extra by 2015. Therefore, whilst the respondent is correct to note that Houghton is expected to expand by approximately one third by 2031 that represents less than 2% per annum across the 20 year period.

A number of representations have been supportive of the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan as a whole or substantial part which helps to support the view that the consultation processes have been attentive to community input.

Several representations make suggestions for additional content, including objectives, but it should be appreciated that, given that the Neighbourhood Plan sits within the development plan documents as a whole, keeping content pertinent is entirely appropriate. There is no obligation on Neighbourhood Plans to be comprehensive in their coverage – unlike Local Plans - and content is properly guided by the priority issues for the community, not least because supporting evidence is required.

I have not mentioned every representation individually but this is not because they have not been thoroughly read and considered in relation to my Examiner role, rather their detail may not add to the pressing of my related recommendations which must ensure that the Basic Conditions are met.

European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Obligations

A further Basic Condition, which the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan must meet, is compatibility with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal. A Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan produced by Harborough District Council has been used to determine whether or not the content of the Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations 2004. The outcome of this assessment concluded it is unlikely

that there will be any significant environment effects arising from the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan, which were not covered in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy and the new Local Plan 2015. Therefore, it was concluded that the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. The Assessment also concluded that the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a substantial effect on the Natura 2000 network of protected sites, and a full Appropriate Assessment is not deemed to be required. A full Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report was carried out as part of the Core Strategy preparation process in 2011. That report concluded that the Harborough Core Strategy alone, or in combination with other plans, is unlikely to have an adverse impact on any of the Natura 2000 sites within approximately 25kms of the boundary of the District. Harborough District Council consulted the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England on the Screening Report and their comments agreeing with the conclusion are included within the Report.

A document titled Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Equality Impact Assessment (April 2017) was also submitted by the Qualifying Body. This concluded that “this assessment has found no negative impacts on any protected characteristic by reference to data or evidence. As a result, no recommendations are made and the assessment finds the Neighbourhood Plan to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act 2010 is met.”

A copy of both of the above Reports was included as a supporting document for the Neighbourhood Plan. Particularly in the absence of any adverse comments from the statutory bodies or the Local Planning Authority, I can confirm that the screening and Appraisal undertaken were appropriate and proportionate and confirm that the Plan has sustainability at its heart.

The Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan has regard to fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the ECHR and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. No evidence has been put forward to demonstrate that this is not the case.

Taking all of the above into account, I am satisfied that the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan is compatible with EU obligations and that it does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Conclusions

This Independent Examiner's Report recommends a range of modifications to the Policies, as well as some of the supporting text and maps, in the Plan. Modifications have been recommended to effect corrections, to ensure clarity and in order to ensure that the Basic Conditions are met. Whilst I have proposed a significant number of modifications, the Plan itself remains fundamentally unchanged in the role and direction set for it by the Qualifying Body. Where deletions have been recommended because of inappropriate repetition or summarising of Core Strategy content, the policy requirements within the Harborough District Core Strategy will still be effective.

I therefore conclude that, subject to the modifications recommended, the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- is compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

On that basis I *recommend* to the Harborough District Council that, subject to the incorporation of modifications set out as recommendations in this report, it is appropriate for the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan to proceed to referendum.

Referendum Area

As noted earlier, part of my Examiner role is to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. I consider the Neighbourhood Area to be appropriate and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore ***recommend*** that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the Neighbourhood Area as approved by the Harborough District Council on 31st July 2015.

Recommendations: (this is a listing of the recommendations exactly as they are included in the Report)

Rec.	Text	Reason
1	<p><i>In the Executive Summary the appropriate word in the detailing of Objective 1 is not “coherence” but ‘cohesion’.</i></p> <p><i>It is more appropriate to say, in the fourth paragraph, that the objectives will be ‘addressed’ rather than “achieved” through the Plan policies.</i></p> <p><i>The number and distribution of policies has been significantly reduced and altered by the recommendations and the listing must therefore be re-tallied to the content.</i></p> <p><i>Since there are extensive content changes and it is difficult to summarise the detailed content fairly, paragraph five should be deleted.</i></p> <p><i>Since I will later conclude that the purpose of the VDS is to provide ‘guidance’, all references to it should be consistently to that effect and the bottom paragraph on page 4 should be reworded as follows: ‘A detailed Village Design Statement (VDS) provides guidance on the local layout and construction details to which all development proposals should have regard.’</i></p>	For clarity and correction
2	<p><i>Delete title 2.1.1 and renumber the subsequent parts of section 2 as 2.2 and 2.3.</i></p> <p><i>In the text of para 2.1 and Fig 2.1 amend all references to Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Plan or Plan Area to read ‘Neighbourhood Area’.</i></p> <p><i>Delete the third sentence in the text of para 2.1 which reads: ‘The parish boundaries are shown in the figure in purple’.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
3	<p><i>Amend the opening of para 2.2 to say ‘Houghton Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body, established ...’</i></p>	For clarity and correction
4	<p><i>Insert an additional sentence to the opening paragraph of the new 2.3 after the second sentence worded as: ‘Harborough District</i></p>	For clarity and correction

	<i>Council compiled the detailed 'Settlement Profile: Houghton on the Hill (2015) as part of their work in preparing the emerging Local Plan; a link to the document is provided in the related Part II of the Plan (index shown in Appendix 3); amend the third sentence of para 2.3 to read: 'It also has challenges some of which the NDP seeks to address:'; delete the final paragraph on page 6.</i>	
5	<i>In the opening paragraph of section 3.2 amend and reduce the final two sentences to: 'Questionnaire analysis is provided in Part II of the Plan and hyperlinks to the relevant parts of that analysis are included below for convenience.'</i>	For clarity and correction
6	<i>Reword the three bullet points as follows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) published in January 2017 updated the housing requirement for Harborough District and, from that, Local Plan trajectories for Houghton as a rural centre suggest a minimum of 152 new dwellings over the Plan period to 2031;</i> ▪ <i>During the preparation of this Plan planning consents for a total of 135 dwellings have been granted; the final Plan is therefore no longer intent on identifying significant sites;</i> ▪ <i>All development will need to show appropriate regard for the guidance in the Village Design Statement (VDS) in Appendix 1'.</i> 	For clarity and correction
7	<i>Reword the opening sentence to para 3.2.5 to read: 'Guided by the NDP Vision Statement, the Harborough District Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), the Plan aims for the environment are:'</i>	For clarity and correction
8	<i>In the final bullet point of 3.2.6 replace "...and new developments will be expected to support such facilities proportionately" with 'and new developments will help to provide new customers'.</i>	For clarity and correction
9	<i>In para 3.3 the appropriate word in the detailing of Objective 1 is not "coherence"</i>	For clarity and correction

	<p><i>but ‘cohesion’ and Objective 9 should be reworded to read: ‘To conserve the built heritage of the village by ensuring that all new development and any alterations to existing buildings are sensitive to their setting and have appropriate regard for the guidance in the Village Design Statement (VDS).’</i></p>	
10	<p><i>Amend Fig 4-1 simply to define the Conservation Area and no other content; amend the title to: ‘Map of the existing village showing the Conservation Area’; amend the List of Figures accordingly.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
11	<p><i>Add paragraph references to the text between Policies: 4.1.1 – 4.1.4.</i></p> <p><i>Rewrite the opening of sentence 2 in the first bullet point on page 11 to read: ‘All development proposals will have to address the relevant statutory obligations.....’</i></p> <p><i>Rewrite bullet point 2 on page 11 to read: ‘In addition Policy D1 ensures that local guidance is specified within the Plan.’</i></p>	For clarity and correction
12	<p><i>For all Policy Boxes: move the “(see Objective ..)” reference from inside to outside the Policy box and perhaps reword as: ‘Related Objective: ..’.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
13	<p><i>Retitle Policy D1 to read: ‘Sustaining the Character of the Conservation Area’.</i></p> <p><i>Rewrite Policy D1 to read: ‘Any proposed developments or changes to existing buildings within the Conservation Area must have appropriate regard for the VDS, in particular the section ‘Building in the Conservation Area (see Appendix 1).’</i></p>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions
14	<p><i>Retitle Policy D2 to read: ‘Sustaining the Character of Houghton outside the Conservation Area’.</i></p> <p><i>Rewrite Policy D2 after the second sentence to read: ‘Development proposals must have appropriate regard for the content of the VDS so as to sustain the essential character and avoid the urbanisation of Houghton.</i></p>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions

	<i>New additions to or alterations of farmsteads and agricultural buildings beyond the village should respect their rural setting and must have appropriate regard for the content of the VDS, in particular the section relating to new construction or alterations of existing buildings beyond the village (see Appendix 1).'</i>	
15	<i>Delete the opening sentence of [the newly numbered] para 4.1.3. Repword sentence 2 as the introduction to the bullet points to read: 'The design guidance in the VDS helps to ensure that the much-loved rural aspect of the village is sustained.'</i> <i>Ensure that the two only bullet points that follow the introduction are correctly formatted.</i>	For clarity and correction
16	<i>Retitle Policy D3 to read: 'Sustaining the Rural Character of Houghton through the use of Open Spaces'.</i> <i>Rewrite Policy D3 to read: 'Incidental green spaces, as identified in Figure 4-2, are an essential part of the rural character of Houghton as is recognised within the VDS. Development proposals within the village must ensure that this green aspect is sustained by incorporating new green spaces and having appropriate regard for the related VDS guidance (Appendix 1).'</i> <i>Relocate and renumber Fig. 4-7 as 4-2 and renumber subsequent Figures and their references accordingly. Delete from the title of the new Fig. 4-2 all wording other than 'Green Spaces in Houghton'.</i> <i>Amend the Figure reference in the first bullet point in the text that follows this Policy and delete the second bullet point as the related VDS content has been altered (see later recommendations).</i>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions
17	<i>Replace the two line preamble for Section 4.2 with: 'The Neighbourhood Plan has been overtaken by events in relation to its intent to allocate land for additional housing. Three sites, shown on Figure 4-3 as sites 1, 2 & Z, have planning consents for a total of</i>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions

135 dwellings. The Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) published in January 2017 updated the housing requirement for Harborough District and, from that, Local Plan trajectories for Houghton as a rural centre suggest a minimum of 152 new dwellings over the Plan period to 2031; therefore there is a small balance of a minimum of 17 dwellings yet to be met. There is a preference for this additional housing to be provided within the existing built-up area (delineated in the Harborough Core Strategy as the 'Limits to Development') but, in line with best practice, the Plan accommodates the potential for assessed housing demand to increase in the emerging Local Plan or subsequent documents. The community has indicated a strong preference for any additional housing requirement to be accommodated to the north of the A47 and therefore the boundary of the reviewed and extended Limits to Development (shown in Figure 4-3) encompasses, at that location, land for future expansion.'

Add a replacement Policy H1: General Housing Provision

'Housing development within the Houghton Limits to Development, as delineated in Figure 4-3, will be supported provided that each proposal addresses the following criteria:

- a) it does not, cumulatively with other proposals, significantly exceed the target for the delivery of new homes in Houghton set from time to time by the Local Planning Authority; and*
- b) it reflects the size of the current settlement, its road infrastructure and its level of service provision; and*
- c) it is physically and visually connected to and respects the form and character of the existing settlement; and*
- d) safe and convenient access is provided for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians; and*
- e) the mix of dwellings proposed is informed by up to date evidence of housing need; and*
- f) affordable housing is provided where required by the policies of the Local Planning Authority and, where*

provided, this is fully integrated within the development; and
g) *appropriate regard is demonstrated for the other relevant Policies within this Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Amend and renumber (as per recommendation 16) Figure 4-2 as 4-3 and relocate to be adjacent to the new Policy H1; omit from the Figure the SHLAA sites and the outline of the Conservation Area but instead show the boundary of the extended Limits to Development, as derived from the Harborough Core Strategy but extended to include Sites 1 & Z and also the area known as Site 3 (but this should not be identified as such as explained later); retitle as: 'Map showing consented housing sites and the boundary of the Houghton Limits to Development'; amend the List of Figures accordingly.

Add a paragraph of justification following the Policy as follows:

'The extended boundary of the Limits to Development incorporates the 2 consented developments that are beyond the boundary shown in the Harborough Core Strategy as well as additional land to the north of the A47 that is contiguous with the existing settlement boundary and defined in the HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment (2016) as 'Medium', as shown in Figure 4-4 (there are no locations within the Plan area identified lower on the landscape scale i.e. where the visual intrusion would be low and hence there would be a higher capacity for development).

Policy GD2 in the emerging Harborough Local Plan will permit new housing provided that, inter alia, "it does not, cumulatively with other proposals, significantly exceed the [specified] target for the delivery of new homes in the Rural Centres and Selected Rural Villages".

National Planning Practice Guidance (ref: 41-009-20160211) says: "Neighbourhood plans should consider allocating reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed. This can help minimise potential conflicts and ensure that policies in the neighbourhood plan are not overridden by a new Local Plan".

	<p><i>The Housing & Planning Act 2016 defines Affordable Housing as including rental, shared ownership and starter homes.</i></p> <p><i>Midlands Rural Housing produced a detailed investigation into the housing needs of Houghton on the Hill for HDC and identified a need for 11 open market homes and 14 affordable rented homes in Houghton over the next 5 years for people with a local connection (Midlands Rural Housing: A Detailed Investigation into the Housing Needs of Houghton on the Hill, September 2015). A number of indicators of current local housing requirements emerged from the community responses to Q8 and Q12 in Housing and Use of Land. Whilst not required to rank their responses, respondents consistently selected bungalows and houses in almost equal measure and showed preference for 2 and 3 bedroom properties, which is in line with the Harborough District Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (Jan 2017). Evidence comes from both the number of ticks awarded to each category and the additional comments expressed by respondents.'</i></p> <p><i>Amend and renumber (as per recommendation 16) Figure 4-3 as 4-4 and relocate it close to the new reference as above; omit references to any of the individual housing sites (for clarity) but instead superimpose the extended Limits to Development on the HDC Landscape Values map; retitle as: 'Extended Limits to Development superimposed on the HDC Landscape Capacity values'; amend the List of Figures accordingly.</i></p>	
18	<i>Delete the existing Policy H1 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above.</i>	For clarity and correction
19	<i>Delete Policy H2 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above; renumber subsequent paragraphs.</i>	For clarity and correction
20	<i>Delete para 4.2.2 and renumber subsequent paragraphs.</i>	For clarity and correction

21	<i>Delete Policies H3, H4 & H5 and the supporting text that has not been re-accommodated within Recommendation 17 above.</i>	For clarity and correction
22	<i>Delete Policy H6 and the supporting text.</i>	For clarity and correction
23	<p><i>ReNUMBER Policy H7 as Policy H2; retitle the Policy as: ‘Specialist Housing for People in Later Life’; reword the Policy as follows: ‘Development proposals that comprise or include housing specifically designed for people in their later years, which might include bungalows, sheltered housing and residential care, will be supported provided that each proposal addresses the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) it is sited within the Houghton Limits to Development; and</i> <i>b) its size and configuration are justified by a detailed assessment of the special housing needs to be met; and</i> <i>c) where appropriate, both open market and affordable housing are included; and</i> <i>d) where appropriate, some dwellings designed to the whole-life standard are included; and</i> <i>e) if the reuse or redevelopment of existing buildings are involved, the demands of integrating the new use within the existing built form are addressed; and</i> <i>f) appropriate regard is demonstrated for the other relevant Policies within this Neighbourhood Plan.’</i> <p><i>Amend the supporting text to remove from sentence four the words “... as already mentioned in the narrative supporting Policy H4”; omit from the supporting table the last line (which relates to “wheelchair access and mobility”).</i></p> 	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions
24	<i>Reword Policy S1 as: ‘Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing services that are key to Houghton’s role as a Rural Centre – specifically the food shop, the post office, the primary school and the public houses – or the loss of key facilities – specifically the Village Hall and the sports and recreation</i>	To provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions

	<p><i>grounds – will only be supported if it can be robustly demonstrated that the relevant service or facility is:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>no longer required, or</i> • <i>no longer viable, or</i> • <i>being replaced within the development proposal by a new or improved service or facility that is equivalent or better in terms of quality, quantity and location.'</i> <p><i>Replace the final sentence of the text below the Policy starting: "It does however have...." with: 'Appendix 2 provides more details on Houghton's key services and facilities and their value to the community.'</i></p>	
25	<p><i>Reword Policy S2 as:</i></p> <p><i>'Development proposals should consider, assess and address their impact on and potential to benefit:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>local traffic congestion and existing on-street and off-street parking problems, particularly those associated with the Primary School and other community buildings, and</i> b) <i>pedestrian and cycle movement, and</i> c) <i>village community facilities and in particular their value in helping new community members to settle.</i> 	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions
26	<p><i>Delete Policy S3, its supporting text and Fig. 4.4 or remove them to sit within the Community Projects; adjust subsequent Policy and Figure numbers accordingly.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
27	<p><i>Delete Policy S4 and its supporting text; adjust subsequent Policy numbers accordingly.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
28	<p><i>Rewrite Policy S5 as:</i></p> <p><i>'Major developments of more than 10 dwellings or over 0.5 ha must ensure that adequate broadband services are available to all residents and/or users of the development. Development proposals should incorporate a bespoke duct network, designed and implemented in cooperation with a recognised network provider, and where viable, a fibre to the premises (FTTP) solution. Other forms of infrastructure, such as facilities supporting mobile broadband and Wi-Fi, should be included in major developments and designed in a</i></p>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions

	<i>sympathetic and appropriate way in order to reflect the character of the surrounding area.'</i>	
29	<i>Delete Policy S6, its supporting text and Fig. 4.5; adjust subsequent Figure numbers accordingly.</i>	For clarity and correction
30	<i>Delete Policy T1 and the preamble to it.</i>	For clarity and correction
31	<i>Transfer the content of Policy T2 to the section on Community Projects and within the related Plan text add a cross-reference to the commitment within the Community Projects; delete the final two text paragraphs on p. 28 as the context for them has changed.</i>	For clarity and correction
32	<i>Delete Policy T3 and the related text.</i>	For clarity and correction
33	<i>Transfer the content of Policy T4 and the related text including Table 1 to the section on Community Projects.</i>	For clarity and correction
34	<i>Delete Policy E1 and its related text (Fig 4-7 has already been removed to earlier in the Plan alongside Policy D3); renumber subsequent Policies accordingly.</i>	For clarity and correction
35	<i>Reword Policy E2 as follows: 'The Neighbourhood Area supports a range of protected and vulnerable species and development proposals should address, with mitigation where appropriate, their impact on these and related habitats. Positive measures to sustain wildlife in Houghton would include the provision or alignment of interconnected open spaces in the form of corridors that would allow unrestricted wildlife movement into and within the settlement'.</i>	For clarity and correction and to ensure the Policy meets the Basic Conditions
36	<i>Transfer the content of Policy E3 and the related text to the section on Community Projects.</i>	For clarity and correction
37	<i>Delete Policies E4 & E5 and the related text.</i>	For clarity and correction
38	<i>In the title of Section 5 (both within the Plan and the Content page) replace the word "Development" with 'Neighbourhood'. Delete all the content in paras 1 – 5 so that</i>	For clarity and correction

	<p><i>the reduced content will start: 'Houghton Parish Council will maintain regular contact.....'; delete the heading 5.1.3. Amend the reference to periodic review in the final paragraph to say 'at least every 5 years' in place of "at intervals of about 5 years".</i></p>	
39	<p><i>Remove section 6 to become a new Appendix 4; alter the Contents page accordingly. Incorporate as appropriate into the new Appendix 4 the content recommended for transfer from the Neighbourhood Plan document Policies T2, T4 & E3; remove references to Policies T4 & E3 from para 6.1.4.</i></p>	For clarity and correction
40	<p><i>Amend the VDS as follows: Add a new paragraph 2 under the heading "1.1 Introduction" as follows: 'The guidance in this Statement recognises that developers will probably have a suite of designs they prefer to offer in particular locations and for a particular mix of different size of properties to achieve their objectives for the site, and also recognises that infill, minor development or redevelopment of existing buildings/structures may bring forward creative proposals. The guidance cannot and does not seek to affect those choices, but does seek to improve certain features without destroying the developer's or the individual's designs.'</i></p> <p><i>In paragraph 2 under the heading "1.2 The village context" delete the stranded words "In the HDC Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study (2016)".</i></p> <p><i>In Table 1 the second column should be retitled: 'Village Design Statement response'; at row A4 replace the word "discussed" with 'addressed'; at row B7 replace the words "The development must" with 'Development proposals should'.</i></p> <p><i>At 1.6 amend the title to say: 'Features to be considered in the design of buildings in new developments and for modifications to existing buildings'; in paragraph 1 delete the reference to the "Code for Sustainable Homes" (since this no longer provides a basis for national policy) and replace the</i></p>	For clarity and correction

last sentence with: 'Although no dominant style exists which can be used as a reference for new developments, the following should be taken into account to encourage high quality outcomes both in design and in creating a better place to live which occupants and others in the village can be proud of'.

Within 1.6.1(c) replace the final two sentences with: 'The use of flat roofs on new-build and on extensions to existing dwellings is discouraged unless their use preserves an established, attractive view of the countryside which might otherwise be lost'.

Within 1.6.1(e) delete the words "and this will be encouraged".

Within 1.6.1(g) delete the words "should be permitted" and replace with 'may benefit a design'.

Within 1.6.1(i) delete the sentence "The relationship of garages to the street scene must be a prime consideration in planning decisions" since it duplicates the paragraph opening.

Within 1.6.1(k) replace the words "will be expected to" in the final sentence with 'are encouraged to'.

At 1.6.2 paragraph 5 replace "should be encouraged" with "are encouraged"; in the final paragraph reduce the final sentence to: 'Existing trees along the boundary to a development should be retained wherever possible'.

At 1.6.3 paragraph 2 reduce the second sentence to: 'This connection is important and should not be broken'; in paragraph 4 correct the first sentence to: 'This is the particular strength which defines the character of the built village'; in paragraph 5 delete the confusing and repetitive third sentence commencing: "This consideration of changes....".

Since "1.7 Key considerations" is actually a sub-section of 1.6.3, delete this sub-heading and renumber subsequent sections accordingly; in place of the subheading use

	<p><i>'Key considerations' as the opening words of a new paragraph; to make content easier to reference use numbered (a) – (f) (as used at 1.6.1) to identify the bullet points.</i></p> <p><i>Under 'Key considerations: in bullet point (a) delete sentences 1, 2 and 5 as these are not worded as guidance; in bullet point (c), for the same reason, delete the words "will be acceptable" and replace with 'may be appropriate'; for the same reason in bullet point (e) delete the final sentence and correct the previous sentence to read '...proposed construction at an inappropriate scale....'</i></p> <p><i>At 1.8 amend the title to say: 'Aspects to be considered in the design of new constructions or re-development of existing buildings beyond the village'.</i></p> <p><i>Under "1.8.1 Landscape impact" change the negative wording to positive guidance: in the second sentence replace the words "not impact negatively on" with 'demonstrate appropriate regard for'; in the third sentence replace "not create a negative impact upon" with 'show appropriate regard for'.</i></p> <p><i>Under "1.8.2 Tall structures" ensure that the wording is positive guidance whilst having regard for the possibility that some matters may not require a planning consent: replace "will need to be assessed and agreed before approval is given" with 'should be avoided wherever possible and, where essential, their siting must show careful regard for their impact'.</i></p> <p><i>Section 1.9.1 expresses a frustration rather than design guidance and is therefore inappropriate content for a statutory document; delete section 1.9.1 and renumber the following section as '1.9 Street furniture'.</i></p> <p><i>Under [as now numbered] "1.9 Street furniture" in the second sentence replace the words "must be encouraged" with "are encouraged".</i></p>	
41	<p><i>On p 54 of Appendix 2 in the last line of the page replace "2017" with '2018'.</i></p> <p><i>On p 59 para 1.2.5 correct the name reference from "Annabella's" to 'Annabella'.</i></p>	For correction

42	<i>Re-check the cross-references throughout the document to ensure they have been updated to the amended content and numberings.</i>	For correction
43	<i>Review the arrangement of Appendix 3 so that it aligns helpfully with the revised Plan content after the recommendations have been incorporated.</i>	For clarity and correction