



SHEARSBY
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN
SUBMISSION VERSION
2017 – 2031

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Introduction

from the Chair of Shearsby Parish Council

This Plan has been produced by the Shearsby Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee after many months of study, research and extensive consultation.

Since we wrote to Harborough District Council in November 2014 to seek designation as a Neighbourhood Area, we have consulted within the community through open days and surveys and we believe that this Plan reflects the views of our community. A strong message emanating from the consultation that we have undertaken is that people who live here are proud of our Village and have a strong desire to retain its character. This was key to developing the overarching vision of the Plan, which is:

To maintain and enhance the unique, self-contained character of Shearsby, whilst supporting small scale sustainable growth that is proportionate to the size of the Village and in line with the needs and wishes of the community.

The Plan's objectives and policies have all been derived from this overarching vision and are detailed in this document. We strongly believe that this Plan is robust and when formally 'Made' will provide the necessary guidance and clarity to Officers and Members of Harborough District Council for determining planning applications that relate to Shearsby up to 2031, in line with the timescales of Harborough's draft Local Plan.

We are grateful to Officers and Councillors at Harborough District Council and to the wider community for their involvement in the development of this Plan. We hope you agree that it reflects our aspirations for Shearsby and provides a platform for achieving proportionate, sustainable growth over the coming years to help us achieve our vision.

Martin Reynolds, Chair of Shearsby Parish Council, October 2017

1. Why Neighbourhood Plans are important

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

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established through the Localism Act 2011 and the rules governing their preparation were published in 2012. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a Neighbourhood Plan gives the community “direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need” (NPPF para 183). It enables us to ensure we get the right types of development in the right locations; and to set planning policies that will be used in determining decisions on planning applications across Shearsby.

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

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

A detailed Basic Conditions Statement (Appendix 1), Statement of Consultation (Appendix 2) and a comprehensive Evidence Pack have been produced to support this Neighbourhood Plan and is available in the supporting information.

2. Why we need a Neighbourhood Plan in Shearsby

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

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

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

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

3. How the Plan was prepared

A village Questionnaire in October/November 2013 canvassed the village on its aspirations for the future of Shearsby and arising out of this work came the decision to explore the benefits of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan. This in turn led to a working party of the Parish Council that was established in February 2014 to look in detail at what was involved and to make a recommendation to the Parish Council.

Designation as a Neighbourhood Plan area was applied for on 12 November 2014. Designation was approved by Harborough District Council on 16 January 2015.

A consultation event, in the form of a 'bacon buttie day' took place on 7th February 2015.



The Parish Council took the decision to form an Advisory

Shearsby Neighbourhood Plan Submission version October 2017

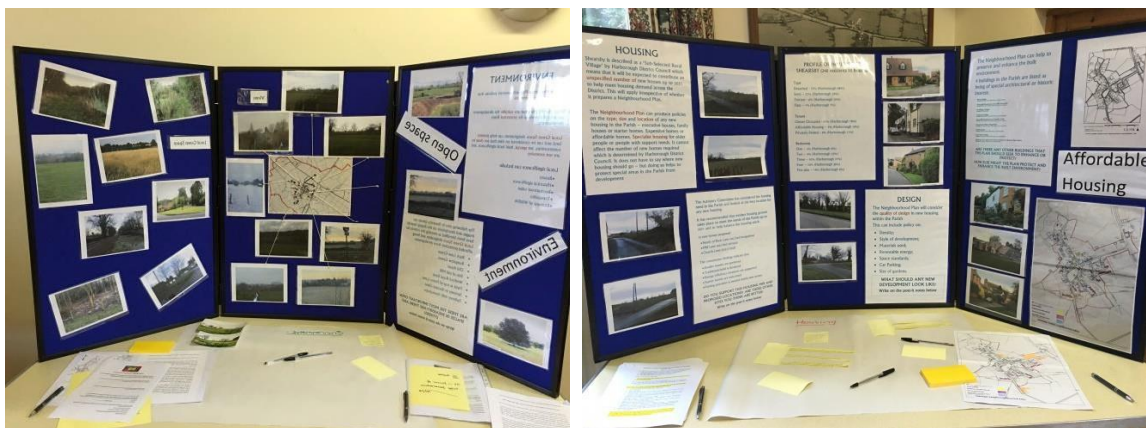
Committee/Steering Group of the Parish Council to drive the process forward in July 2015. Its mandate was to drive the process, consult with the local community and deliver the Plan.

This was an opportunity for Villagers to find out about the Neighbourhood Plan and to offer their views about what was good about Shearsby and what needed to change.

The Advisory Committee/Steering Group continued to meet and to liaise with Officers from Harborough District Council over the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan and letters were sent to stakeholders and to local landowners to seek contributions from a wide range of sources.

Questionnaires were sent to Villagers and to the business community to gather information about a range of issues, and work was undertaken to consider suitable sites for housing and to put forward candidate sites for consideration as Local Green Space designations.

Policy areas began to emerge and a further Open Event was held in January 2016 to report to the local community on progress and to enable the broader stakeholders to comment on the policy themes being developed.





A further Open Event at the Village Hall took place on 5 November 2016 where final housing development proposals were put to the Parish and agreement reached about the drawing of the Limits to Development to shape housing growth up to 2031. Minor amendments were made at the Parish Council meeting held on 1 December 2017.

The Neighbourhood Plan policies gradually took shape as these consultations provided more information to build on the other evidence gathered through a wide range of sources.

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

Having been through a statutory six-week pre-submission consultation, amendments have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan which is now ready to be submitted to Harborough District Council who will publicise it for a further six weeks and then forward it with accompanying documents and all representations made during the publicity period to an independent Examiner who will review it and check that it meets the 'Basic Conditions'. If the Plan successfully passes this stage, with any modifications, it will be put forward for referendum. Everyone who lives in the Parish of Shearsby and is on the electoral register will be entitled to vote.

The referendum question will be a straight “yes” or “no” on the entire Plan, as set out by Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. People will not be able to vote for or against individual policies. If 50% or more of those voting, vote for the Plan, it will be brought into force and become part of District-wide planning policy.

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

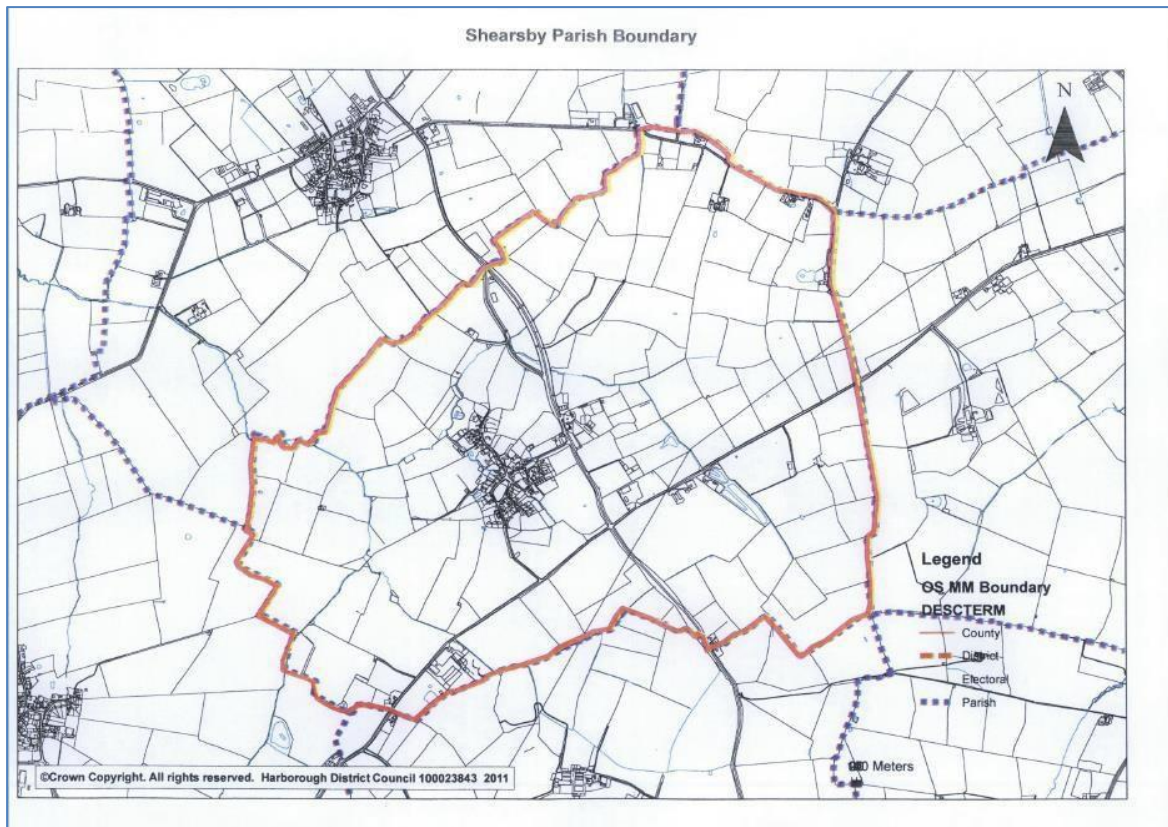
The Proposed Submission Local Plan (considered by Harborough District Council's Executive on 4 September 2017) classifies Shearsby within 'Other Villages and Rural Settlements' and sets out the 'Approach to development' as 'Other villages and rural settlements are considered the least sustainable locations for growth and are covered by housing in the countryside policy. New housing will be limited to housing to meet an identified need (either through a housing needs survey or neighbourhood plan), housing to meet the needs of a rural worker, rural exception sites, isolated homes in the countryside in accordance with NPPF paragraph 55, and replacement dwellings.'

If this classification remains in the Local Plan once Adopted, it will mean that Shearsby will be required to make a limited contribution towards the overall housing target for the District. The Neighbourhood Plan will be able to shape and control this development along the lines identified by the local community. Although the current Core Strategy regards Shearsby as an unsustainable location for development, it has nonetheless seen development activity with new house building taking place in recent years.

4. Our Neighbourhood

The Plan area comprises the whole of the Parish of Shearsby in the Harborough District within Leicestershire, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 -Parish of Shearsby - Plan Area designated on 16 January 2015.



The Proposed Submission Local Plan (considered by Executive on 4th September) Settlement Hierarchy classifies Shearsby within 'Other Villages and Rural Settlements' It is therefore considered to be a suitable location for limited development.

The Village itself has a long history. The name 'Shearsby' evokes the Danish invaders and settlers prior to the Norman Conquest and the undulating ridge and furrow in the surrounding fields is a visible reminder of the husbandry that has been practiced by the inhabitants in its former open and common fields from the days of its earliest settlement until the late 18th Century, when enclosure brought into being the field pattern familiar today and by so doing revolutionised centuries- old farming practices.

The Village itself lies in a hollow close to the A5199 Leicester to Northampton Road. The Conservation Area embraces the whole of the compact village and includes Back Lane and the land either side up to the junction with the A5199 where there are some older buildings. It also includes peripheral open areas of pastures which are important to the overall character and settlement.

Back Lane drops steeply from the A5199, with a generous tree lined grass verge; it then narrows and at its lower end is flanked by red brick buildings on a cobble or granite plinth. The Old Rectory, a long and low red brick building sits well back at an angle directly in front of the church and looks outwards up Back Lane. The former farmyard has been sympathetically developed into dwellings with the addition of two properties.



A side road off Back Lane slopes upwards past several 1950s semi-detached houses to newer bungalows in a cul-de-sac. An offshoot of this road sweeps past The Cottage, a red brick house and round to The Bank where two 1960s bungalows sit near to a row of old cottages, the first of

which was The Old Crown public house.

The centre of Shearsby is a large (100m long) enclosed open space of the Green with an encircling road. The road at its lower and narrow end is The Square with substantial houses overlooking it and small old red brick cottages at the edge of the Green flanking it. In one corner is a small grassed area with a K6 telephone kiosk and water pump.

The green is enclosed, in part by the buildings adjacent to The Square, in part to the south by a red brick wall, and partly by a hedge. It is the centre of the village structure. Around the Green are cottages and more substantial houses, in red brick or slate or rendered. The wall helps to emphasise the sense of enclosure round the Green.

From the Green and its encircling road lead out various roads: the narrow Back Lane rises up to the A5199; Mill Lane with early cottages on either side rises to the Bath Lane passing by the site of a windmill mound at the highest point where there are panoramic views of the countryside. The short Fenny Lane is a cul-de-sac rising towards open countryside from The Chandlers Public House. It is closely developed with a mixture of buildings in age and style including a 17th century timber framed thatched house.



A fourth road, Church Lane, is a longer, no-through road straggling downwards to the north. Close to The Square and facing in from a bank is the symmetrical Church Farm House. Behind it is the churchyard gate with its cast iron overthrow looking downhill towards The Square. A yew tree

here, partially overhanging the lane, closes the view downwards from The Square. Opposite, facing Church Lane is the substantial 16th century timber framed and thatched Yeoman Cottage. Beyond, the churchyard rises steeply to the south with retaining granite wall and the church's squat sandstone tower of 1789 with elaborate weather vane. It is the church tower and weather vane that make a visual stop looking up Church Lane towards the village. Immediately opposite is the former 19th century village school now the village hall (enlarged 1997).



The rest of Church Lane is a mixture of old and new farmhouses cottages and individual new houses whose materials and massing orientation are in sympathy with the irregular form of building in the lane. The use of slate for houses, cottages and farm buildings is a notable feature of Shearsby.



Ancient cottages from the 16th and 17th Centuries still stand, having been adapted for 21st Century living.

Shearsby today has 240 residents and 95 households (Census 2011).

At 24%, its proportion of residents aged 65 and over is significantly higher than the Harborough or national average (18 and 16% respectively). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the age of the population, levels of economic activity in the Parish at 65% are lower than District or national averages and the retired population is relatively high.

97% of the population is classed as White, close to the District figure.

A high percentage of people work from home – at 13% this is more than double the District percentage (6%) and nearly four times greater than that for England as a whole.

85% of homes are in owner-occupation, higher than across the District, whilst a far higher proportion in Shearsby is detached (72%) compared to Harborough District (48%). Levels of Social Housing across the Parish are lower than across the District and the number of smaller homes (1 and 2 bed) at 13% of the housing stock is very small compared to Harborough District which has 28% of its total housing stock within these categories. Perhaps unsurprisingly, at 44%, the number of larger homes (4 bed plus) is significantly higher than the Harborough average (34%).

House prices too are high within the Parish, leaving a large affordability gap for those on low incomes alongside a lack of appropriate housing for young families or older residents wishing to down size. In 2014, the average price of a home in Shearsby was £360,999. This has since risen to £420,000 (2016) according to figures issued by Rightmove.

5. What we want the Neighbourhood Plan to achieve

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

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

There are some restrictions to what Neighbourhood Plans can achieve. For example:

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

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

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

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

To improve the sustainability of Shearsby as a demographically mixed and balanced community, whilst seeking opportunities for landscape, recreational and ecological gain and minimising the environmental impact of new development.

6. Meeting the requirement for sustainable development

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

a) Housing

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

- Maintain the compact form of the Village
- Are on roads or streets that allow safe road access or where safe road access can be achieved through improvements;
- Are within easy access to community facilities and accessible green open space.

We're also seeking to deliver a mix of housing types so that we can meet the needs of present and future generations and ensure that we support the community's needs and its health, social and cultural wellbeing. We are particularly looking to provide bungalows for older people as well as some smaller homes in the form of two sites. The building specification would emphasise sustainability: quality that will age well with low environmental impact.

b) Environment

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

- The special open spaces within our village are protected from development, to protect the village identity and retain the rural nature of its surroundings;

- Development preserves and contributes to the attractive local countryside including replacement of any hedging which needs to be maintained.
- Development recognises the need to protect and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats and includes adding hedging to boundaries of new developments;
- Consideration is given to improving pedestrian and cycling facilities to enable access from the village to The Old Road and to provide a safe footpath and bridleway on Bath Lane between A5199 and Bruntingthorpe.

c) Economy

- Whilst the community is primarily residential, there is a desire to safeguard its employment outlets, including the farming community. We therefore wish to retain the current level of employment, and develop it further where possible, in our area by:
- Retaining our existing sites which provide jobs for continued use and where possible improving them, unless it can be clearly proven that they are not viable;
- Supporting diversification of existing businesses where necessary;
- Encouraging appropriate business development by supporting the use of land to the East of the A5199 and to the South of Saddington Road as sites for 4–6 small business units with, possibly, accommodation above some units. These units should be available for local arts and crafts/agricultural based enterprises.

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

7. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

7.1 Strategy

The purpose of the UK Planning System as set out in the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development, ensuring that providing for the needs of the current generation does not make life worse for future generations.

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

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

The community has taken the decision to positively plan for housing growth within the Parish by identifying specific housing sites and by working with partners to deliver a housing offer that meets the needs of the community over the Plan period. When considering development proposals, the Plan will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in national and District-wide plans and policies.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WHEN USING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TO DETERMINE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT, ALL OF THE POLICIES CONTAINED IN THE PLAN MUST BE CONSIDERED TOGETHER IN FORMING A VIEW.

7.2 Housing

Introduction

Shearsby is a picturesque village in the district of Harborough which is a popular and attractive place to live, set within attractive countryside and enjoying a location that avoids through traffic.

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

There are 95 houses in the village comprising: 12 one or two-bedroom houses

41 three-bedroom houses 29 four bedroom houses

13 five or more bedroom houses

Of these, 68 are detached houses, with 20 being semi-detached and 6 being terraced. There is one apartment in the village.

81 homes are in owner occupation. 5 are classed as affordable housing and 8 are privately rented.

At 72% there are more detached houses in the Parish than across Harborough (49%) or England (22%) and fewer semi-detached and terraced houses. There are also fewer smaller homes (13% 1 and 2 bed properties) than across Harborough (28%) and more 4 and 5 bedroom properties than across Harborough (44% compared to 33%). Levels of affordable housing at 5% is half the 10% across Harborough whilst average house prices are now listed by Right Move as being £420,000 (2016) which is significantly higher than nearby villages of Gilmorton, Kibworth Beauchamp and Fleckney. Property prices therefore greatly exceed regional and national levels and homes for sale are sought after.

Between 1995 and 2011, seven new homes were built in Shearsby – all

detached and an opportunity to rebalance the housing stock was lost.

Shearsby has an ageing population with 24% of its population being aged 65 and over compared to 18% across Harborough and 16% across England.

Consultation has shown that the community favours the availability of smaller housing which is more suitable for young families and those on lower incomes. Residents also favour the availability of bungalows to enable older members of the community to downsize but remain in the village. Residents are generally against further larger houses being developed. (Comments from first questionnaire in 2014 and the first Bacon Butty Day).

b) Housing Provision

The Core Strategy for Harborough indicates where new house building will take place to meet the District wide target of at least 12,800 dwellings to 2031.

Shearsby is currently classified as 'countryside'. CS17 states that development in settlements lower in the hierarchy than Selected Rural Villages which are in the countryside should be 'strictly controlled'.

The emerging Local Plan for Harborough is updating the housing need across the District and the allocation of housing within it. There is a requirement to provide for at least 12,800 dwellings up to 2031 across the District.

The Proposed Submission Local Plan, considered by the District Council Executive on 5 September 2017, establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for development. On the basis of this hierarchy, Shearsby is within 'Other Villages and Rural Settlements' and is considered amongst the least sustainable locations for growth.

Determining how many new dwellings the Parish should plan for is not straightforward as the draft Local Plan does not apportion a housing target

to this category within the hierarchy. New housing will be limited to housing to meet an identified need (either through a housing needs survey or neighbourhood plan), housing to meet the needs of a rural worker, rural exception sites, isolated homes in the countryside in accordance with NPPF paragraph 55, and replacement dwellings.

Through the Neighbourhood Plan, the opportunity has been taken to positively plan for development within Shearsby that meets a local need and helps to support local services.

Initially, it was intended to allocate housing development within the Neighbourhood Plan. However, sites that were initially put forward were later withdrawn. The idea of allocating specific sites was therefore removed from the Pre-Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Whilst not allocating a minimum housing target, the Neighbourhood Plan has introduced Limits to Development which have been drawn to allow for growth in the village in line with the existing Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan requirements. This will enable the Parish to secure the growth that is recognised as being necessary in locations that are favoured by the community, avoiding the uncertainty that comes with speculative development proposals that threaten the character of the village into the future.

c) Limits to Development

Limits to Development are a commonly used tool in planning documents such as Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans. They are used to define the extent of a built-up part of a settlement. They distinguish between areas where in planning terms development would be acceptable in principle such as in the main settlements and where it would not be (generally in the least sustainable locations) such as in the open countryside.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the village of Shearsby. The proposed Limits to Development is shown in figure 2 below and was developed following consultation.

Focusing limited development in the village of Shearsby will help to support the existing very limited services and facilities in the village and the wider Parish, such as the pub, church and village hall and help protect the countryside from inappropriate development.

Within the defined Limits to Development identified in this Plan, small scale, sustainable development will be viewed sympathetically. This development will mainly comprise infill – the filling of a restricted gap in an otherwise built up frontage – and the conversion of an existing building. Any development will be required to demonstrate that it meets an identified local need, particularly in terms of type and size, and is well designed and located.

In addition, much of the built-up parts of Shearsby have developed at relatively low densities. There are substantial areas of green spaces and many properties are set within relatively large grounds and gardens. These spaces between and around buildings contribute significantly to the special character of the village and the wider Parish and maintaining residential amenity. When considering development proposals, it is also important therefore to have regard to the impact the proposed development will have on the setting and layout of the surrounding area.

It will also be necessary to protect and enhance special views and vistas. As the approved Conservation Area Appraisal for Shearsby underlines, the settlement includes peripheral open areas of pastures which are important to the overall character and settlement. The consultation also underlined that they are highly prized by the local community.

Methodology

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

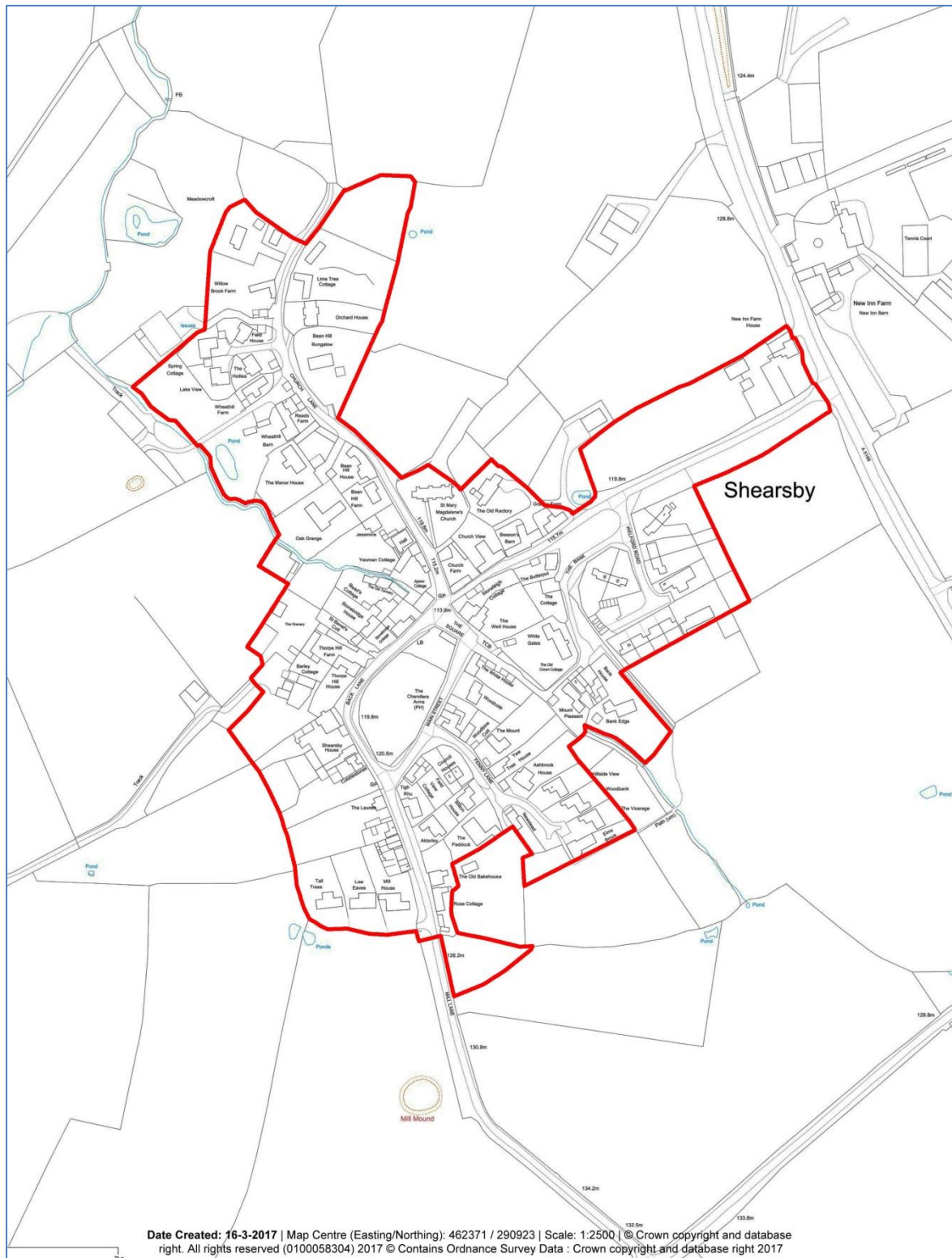
1. Clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows and roads have been followed;
2. Potential small-scale development areas have been incorporated

into the drawing of the Limits to Development to enable housing growth into the future, subject to the requirements specified within the Neighbourhood Plan. Landowners within this area have expressed a desire to undertake residential development on their land.

POLICY H1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT – Within the defined Limits to Development as shown in Figure 2, development proposals for small scale infill development (up to 4 units) and the conversion of existing buildings will be looked on sympathetically where it:

- Is small scale, and reflects the size, character and level of service provision of Shearsby;
- Helps meet a clearly identified need for Shearsby or the wider Parish;
- Retains existing natural boundaries such as trees, hedges and streams which either contribute to visual amenity or are important for their ecological value;
- Preserves and, where possible, enhances the setting of any heritage asset, where the setting of that heritage asset would be affected by the proposal;
- Preserves and, where possible, enhances Shearsby Conservation area, where relevant;
- Provides suitable off-road parking in line with Leicestershire County Council Highways requirements;
- Does not reduce garden/green space to an extent where it adversely affects the special character of the area or the amenity of the proposed occupiers of the new development or adjacent properties/uses.

Figure 2: Limits to Development



d) Housing Mix

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

The Census suggested a need for a percentage of smaller homes of three bedrooms or fewer. Housing developments must therefore provide a mixture of housing to meet this need within the local community.

The proportion of owned properties in the Parish (either owned outright or with a mortgage) at 85% is higher than the proportion in Harborough District (78%) and in the East Midlands (67%). Levels of social rented accommodation (5.3%) are lower than the district, regional and national levels. There is also a lower than average number of households in the private rented sector at 6%. The level of private rented accommodation in Harborough District is 11.2%, in the East Midlands it is 14.9% and in England 16.8%.

There is a higher than average proportion of people aged 65 and over with 24% of the population in that age bracket, compared with 18 % across the wider Harborough district.

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

A detailed housing needs report is provided as Appendix 5.

POLICY H2: HOUSING MIX – New housing development proposals should provide a mixture of housing types specifically to meet identified local needs in Shearsby.

Sites should deliver more than 50% of the units as 3-bed or fewer (which can include bungalows for older people which should be built to the recognised mobility/wheelchair standard).

7.3 Housing Design

Shearsby has a long and interesting history, resulting in a wide array of heritage assets, attractive landscapes and a distinctive local character.

The biggest challenge facing the future of the Parish is to balance the desire to protect the character of the village with the need for the village to grow and evolve in a sensitive and proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities.

The policies in this section seek to reflect the design principles which the community believes will help to achieve this aim.

The overall aim is to protect Village so that it retains its character as a unique and distinctive Parish. This can be achieved by the use of the planning system to respond sensitively to the wide range of historic buildings, styles, structures, landscapes and archaeology situated within the Parish. These assets form many of the key characteristics of the Parish, and future development should seek to enhance this distinctive environment.

In this section therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan sets out planning policies which seek to identify and protect the distinctive elements which together provide the special qualities of the landscape setting and built heritage of Shearsby Parish.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to sit within the distinctive settlement patterns of Shearsby. Existing settlement patterns have grown incrementally over time. The buildings date from many different periods, providing a richness and variety of styles and materials. This traditional rural character should be enhanced by new development and schemes should be designed to ensure that new buildings sit comfortably within the existing settlement pattern, and are respectful of their surroundings.

POLICY H3: Building Design Principles – All new development proposals of one or more houses, replacement dwellings and extensions will need to

satisfy the following building design principles:

- a) Care should be taken to ensure that the development does not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact negatively on any significant wider landscape views;
- b) New buildings should follow a consistent design approach in the use of materials, fenestration and the roofline to the building. Materials should be chosen to complement the design of the development and add to the quality or character of the surrounding environment and of the Conservation Area;
- c) All new housing should reflect the character and historic context of existing developments within the Parish. However, contemporary and innovative materials and design will be supported where positive improvement can be robustly demonstrated without detracting from the historic context;
- d) Development should enhance biodiversity and relate well to the topography of the area, with existing trees and hedges preserved whenever possible; and
- e) Development should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology, as appropriate.

a) Tandem and Back land development

Consultation has highlighted a lack of support for ‘tandem’ and ‘back land development’ defined as the placing of one dwelling behind another within a single plot and the erection of a dwelling or dwellings on parts of large gardens attached to existing dwellings.

POLICY H4: TANDEM AND BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT in gardens of existing properties will not be supported where the development would cause harm to the local area.

7.4 Heritage

Consultation has shown a desire to balance the need to protect the character of the village with the need for the village to grow and evolve in a sensitive and proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities.

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance of Shearsby Conservation Area and its importance in protecting its character. It supports proposals that preserve and enhance the unique character of this area.

There are also a number of built landmarks around the Parish that by their position and different architectural styles punctuate the street scene and contribute to the overall character of Shearsby.

Eight are identified as being of national importance, and legally protected through their Listed Building status. These are shown below:

- Church of St Mary Magdalene, Church Lane: Grade II*
- Bean Hill Farmhouse and Garden Wall, Church Lane: Grade II
- Cobblestones, Back Lane: Grade II
- Lime Tree Cottage, Church Lane: Grade II
- Rose Cottage, Mill Lane: Grade II
- Wheathill Farmhouse and Little Wheathill, Church Lane: Grade II
- Woodbine Cottage: Grade II
- Yeoman Cottage, Church Lane: Grade II

Designation as Listed Buildings gives them special legal protection. It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan highlights them, especially to ensure that all interested parties are aware of the need to protect and enhance their local importance and merit.

A milepost beside the A5199 at the north end of the parish is also Listed, but is believed locally to have been removed in the 1960s, and there is no

trace of it today.

Figure 3 Shearsby Conservation Area



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Development proposals that affect a Listed Building or any other nationally designated heritage asset will be considered in accordance with national and district wide planning policies.

7.5 Community facilities and amenities

With increasing mobility the viability of many rural services has declined significantly over recent years.

At present, Shearsby's facilities include a Pub, and conference facility, a Church, a village hall, a village green, a play area and employment facilities at a small business park close to the main A5199 which runs through the Parish.

There are over 5 clubs and societies in the Parish, some operating from the village hall, whilst open spaces include the village green with its children's play area.

To promote the on-going prosperity of the Parish it is essential that Shearsby retains its local services that will sustain the vitality of the community. The presence of community facilities and amenities make a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of Shearsby and has a positive impact on the sustainability of the Parish, enhancing the quality of life and often providing an important focal point for social interaction.

At an Open Event in February 2015 overwhelmingly supported the prevention of change of use of the Chandlers Pub (67 for a 6 against).

At the consultation event in January 2016 further support was expressed for the protection of the Pub and the village green and to continue to promote the village hall.

a. Protecting existing community facilities

The current range of facilities in the Parish includes the following:

i. Village Hall

Located in Church Lane opposite the Church, the village hall forms a focal point for village life by providing a modern venue for private and public meetings and functions.

Built in 1862 as the village school, the building became the Church Hall once the school had closed and later was purchased and upgraded by the Parish Meeting in 1997 and is now run by the village through a charitable trust. The Hall is now equipped to the highest standards and suits a wide range of uses. The kitchen is fitted with a professional catering gas range cooker and hob, and rapid dishwashing facilities. Tables, chairs, table ware, glasses and cooking equipment are provided for up to 60 people.

ii. Church

The church of St Mary Magdelene has little of the original fabric although some are thought to date from the 15th century. The church perched on a hill has a 18th century tower, south porch, nave and chancel.

The unusual Georgian west tower built in 1789 is ashlar faced and topped by a small octagon. The memorial urns are more modern and placed at each corner on the top of the tower. The west doorway has a quatrefoil window over and above an ogee arch. In 1856 the church was restored by F. W. Oridish who restored the interior and the high-pitched roof. The side walls were also rebuilt but were temporarily 'jacked-up' and in 1872 J. Goddard faced them with Enderby granite.

iii. Pubs and function venues

The Chandlers is a traditional village pub overlooking the village green. It is a haven for real ale enthusiasts and sells a wide selection of real ales mainly from local microbreweries but also some from further afield. There is an annual beer festival in July which usually focuses on one area of the country.

Shearsby Bath offers a range of entertainment, private hire and wedding facilities. It is only open for private hire.

iv. Village green and play area

The village green is the location for local events such as Live on the Green music concerts, fetes etc.

To promote the on-going prosperity of the Parish it is essential that Shearsby retains its remaining community facilities and amenities and continues to provide the local services that will sustain the vitality of the community and encourage local spending. The Village Hall and the Green are now owned by the Parish Council

Both the NPPF and the draft Harborough Local Plan indicate that valued community facilities should be retained. Policy CF1 and the following text explains how the Plan will contribute towards the objective of maintaining an adequate level and range of facilities.

Policy CF1: THE RETENTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES – Development leading to the loss of an existing community facility (including the village hall, village green, children’s play area, Chandlers Arms and Shearsby Bath) will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) There is no longer any need or demand for the existing community facility; or
- b) The existing community facility is no longer economically viable; or
- c) The proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the existing community facility to an equally or more appropriate and accessible location within the Parish which complies with the other general policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

b. Promoting additional community facilities and amenities

Community consultation confirmed the importance of enhancing the range of community facilities and amenities in the Parish, recognising their value to the local community.

In particular, improvements to the village hall were highlighted. However, concern was also expressed amongst the community about inadequate car parking facilities and any expansion to local services would need to take this into account.

POLICY CF2: NEW OR IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES – Proposals that improve the quality and/or range of community facilities, will be supported provided that the development:

- a) Will not generate a need for parking that cannot be adequately catered for; and**
- b) Is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle.**

7.6 Rural Economy

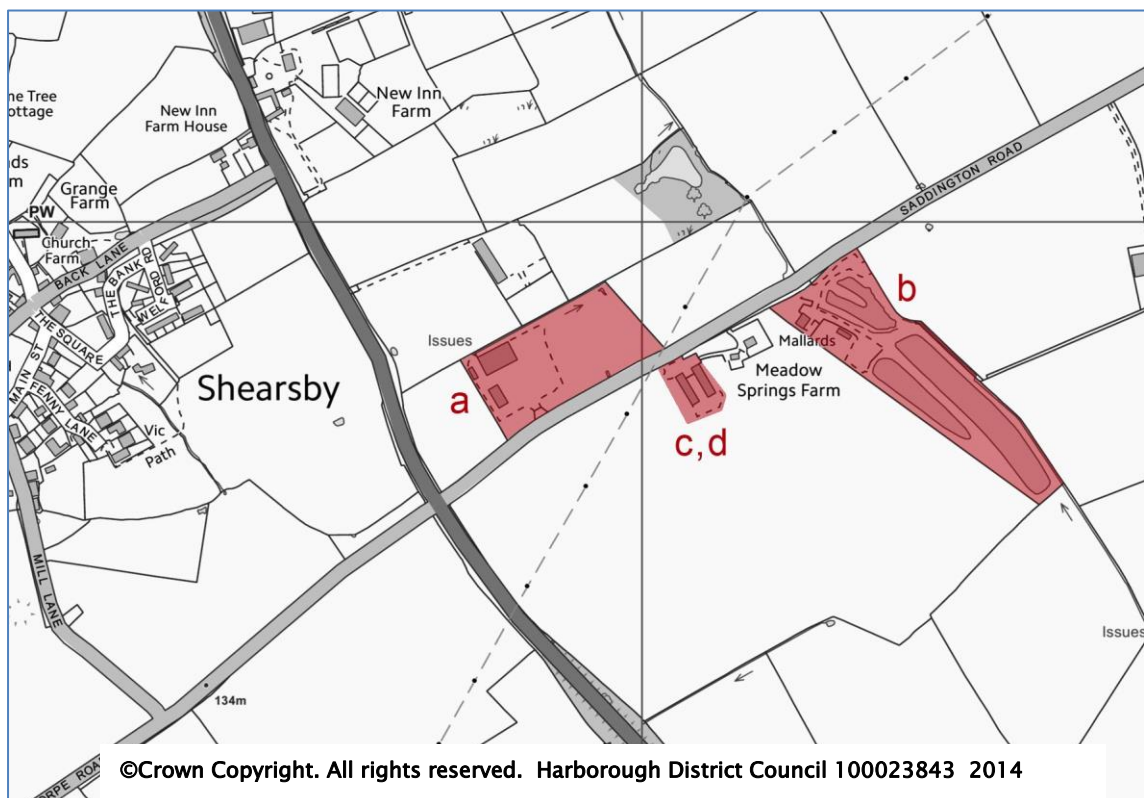
a) Support for existing

Unusually for such a small and rural Parish, Shearsby is home to a wide range of businesses which provide local employment opportunities and which make a major contribution to the economic sustainability of the Parish.

Traditionally the main business activities in the Parish have been related to farming and agriculture. Whilst the Parish has responded positively to changing circumstances over the centuries it remains largely rural and agricultural in character with 4 working farms. The extensive land and property occupied by these businesses contributes fundamentally to the rural character of the Parish.

Other significant businesses in the Parish today include a) Houghton's Agricultural Services, b) Shearsby Valley Lakes, c) K9 dog care services and d) Balls Wood Furniture

Figure 4 – Map of existing Shearsby employment sites



The strength of the local economy and of the community goes hand in hand. Supporting the growth of a stronger local economy is recognised as an important theme of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is recognised by villagers who offered general support for business expansion in appropriate locations within the Parish as expressed at the Open Event in January 2016.

In a questionnaire distributed to the business community in April 2015, 11 of the 18 local businesses offered their views on the future of employment related activities in the Parish. A majority of respondents were in favour of preserving existing employment sites for small businesses, making more land available for development and of keeping housing and commercial activities separated. The biggest expressed need amongst respondents was an improvement in broadband speed.

There is an increasing number of residents who are home workers (13.3% of people living in the Parish (aged 16–64) compared to 5.7% in Harborough District and 3.5% across England) choosing or needing to work from home which is exacerbated by the absence of public transport.

At 48.5% the number of residents that go to work by car (either as driver or passenger), are lower than the rates for the District (53.3%) but higher than those for England (40.2%). The proximity of the employment site in the Parish may contribute to the relatively low levels.

The dedicated employment opportunities within the Parish are relatively good for a Parish the size of Shearsby and in line with public opinion as expressed through the various consultation events and in line with district and national policies that seek to protect employment opportunities the Neighbourhood Plan supports the continued existence of the employment site on Saddington Road, which provides premises for local businesses and should be retained for employment generating uses.

It is proposed that such facilities are protected against being lost to other uses. To do so, it is necessary to restrict the demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises (B-class uses) for non-commercial

purposes.

Only if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of the existing building or land being used for employment-generating purposes can this be permitted.

In order therefore to demonstrate that commercial land or property can be redeveloped for non-commercial uses, the land or buildings must not have been in active use for at least twelve months and it must be clear that there is little or no prospect of the premises or land being reoccupied by an employment-generating user in the future. This must be demonstrated by a sustained marketing campaign lasting at least six months, undertaken through an appropriate commercial agent. This must show that all reasonable steps have been taken to market the property and that there has been no interest from a credible party.

POLICY E1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES –There will be a strong presumption against the loss of commercial premises or land (B-class) on the Saddington Road employment site, which provides employment and future potential employment opportunities Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- a) The commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least 12 months; and
- b) The commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least six months

The small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the Parish will be supported

b) Support for new employment opportunities

Support for new employment opportunities has been recognised through community consultation which has identified broad support for a stronger local economy which will provide more local employment opportunities thus encouraging new business start-ups or expansion of those existing businesses within the Parish. Consequently, these opportunities should be accommodated wherever possible and businesses should be encouraged to remain within the community and to grow. The Parish also needs to attract appropriate new enterprises in the right locations to boost and diversify the local economy and to provide more local employment opportunities.

Support for appropriate business development is welcomed throughout the various consultation processes. However, employment proposals should only be seen as acceptable if they avoid harmful impacts on other matters agreed to be locally important such as residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment. The crossroads adjacent to the employment area (Saddington Road and the A5199) has the fourth-worst accident record of roads in the County. Any business development would need to make sure that the growth in employment activity did not exacerbate this existing accident hot-spot.

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

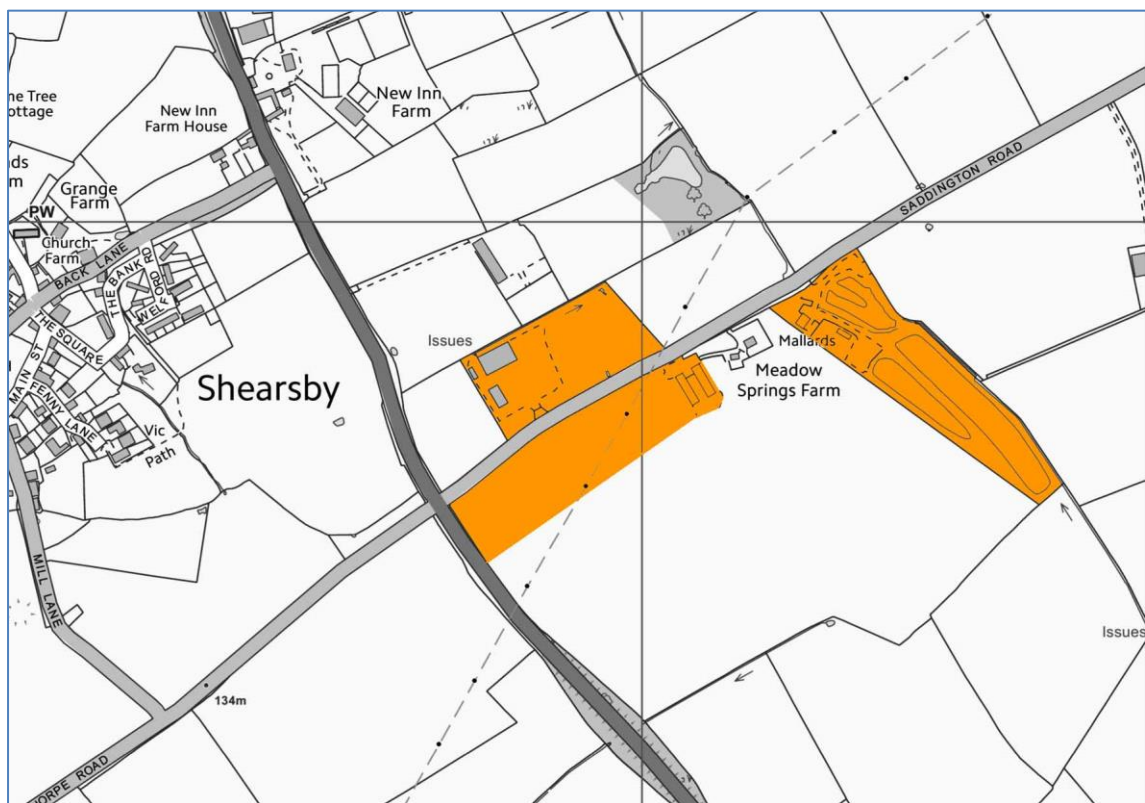
POLICY E2: SUPPORT FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES – In supporting additional employment opportunities, Class B1 Light Industrial purposes will be supported at existing or the proposed sites (figures 4 and 5) at Saddington Rd provided:

- a) it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location or there are proven exceptional circumstances; and

- b) where it can be demonstrated that there would be no adverse impact or conflict on surrounding residential and community amenity and uses; and
- c) that the impact on the road network of any additional business development is mitigated.

Proposals for General Industrial use (B2) and large scale B1 uses will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances; large scale B1 and B2 uses being directed towards higher order settlements in the settlement hierarchy and suitable locations on the edge of the built framework of Leicester, as they are likely to have existing infrastructure and facilities to deliver and sustain such employment proposals.

Figure 5 – Proposed Shearsby Employment Area



c) Farm diversification

There are four working farms remaining in the Parish. To help maintain the rural economy and protect the open countryside from inappropriate development, the Plan supports the sustainable growth and expansion of

business and enterprise through the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside. Specifically, this is intended to:

- a) Promote a viable and sustainable farming and rural economy in Shearsby Parish;
- b) Promote the diversification of rural businesses;
- c) Encourage new businesses to provide a wider range of local produce, services and leisure facilities, to provide local employment and attract visitors to the Parish;
- d) Maintain and enhance the local environment of rural and agricultural lands.

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

POLICY E3: RE-USE OF AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS –

The re-use, conversion and adaptation of rural buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes will be supported where:

- a) The use proposed is appropriate to the rural location;
- b) The conversion/adaptation works respect the local character of the surrounding area
- c) The development will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental features
- d) The local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site.

- e) **There is no significant adverse impact on neighbours through noise, light pollution, increased traffic levels or increased flood risk**

d) Broadband infrastructure

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

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

The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago – in Shearsby Parish 13.3% of people work from home (above the Harborough-wide total of 5.7% and over double the regional and national percentages) and 20.0% are self-employed, again significantly higher than district (12.9%), regional (8.7%) or national (9.8%) levels.

The provision of high speed broadband to serve Shearsby is therefore very important.

A high-speed connection was achieved in December 2015 and this must be maintained and if possible improved to support businesses and home working activities across the Parish.

POLICY E4: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE – Proposals to provide increased access to a super-fast broadband service (of at least 30Mbps) and improve the mobile telecommunication network that will serve businesses and other properties within the Parish will be supported. This may require above ground network installations, which must be

sympathetically located and designed to integrate into the landscape and not be located in or near to open landscapes.

e) Homeworking.

In rural areas like Shearsby the benefit of supporting home working is that it helps to promote employment activities whilst reducing the dependency of the car for long journeys to employment sites outside the Parish.

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

Support was expressed through community engagement, particularly the business questionnaire, conducted through the Neighbourhood Plan to encourage people to run businesses from home. The intention of Policy E5 is to recognise that people may not have a suitable space within their home from which to run a business, or they may wish to distinctly and deliberately separate their work and living space. Policy E5 supports the construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new free-standing buildings in gardens from which businesses can operate. This is intended to maximise the opportunity for home run enterprises to be created and supported in the long term in Shearsby.

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

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

- a) No significant and adverse impact arises to nearby residents or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, odour or other nuisance associated with the work activity;
- b) Does not generate unacceptable levels of traffic movement or additional on–street parking; and
- c) Any extension or free–standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.

7.5 Natural and Historical Environment

a) Introduction

As in most of the landscape of what would become Leicestershire, prehistoric people with their worked flints were here in the late Palaeolithic; but Shearsby has been occupied, probably continuously, since the early centuries AD, when a Romano–British farmstead was located near modern Brant Hill Farm. The present village was established in the Dark Ages, either as part of the Saxon settlement of the Midlands (in the 7th century) or, more likely, in the 9th century when people of Danish origin arrived, calling their cluster of huts and the surrounding clearings something like ‘Skeifr’s farmstead’, the second element of the place name being the Old Norse ‘by’.

The Danish village site was chosen for features that still characterise Shearsby today: in a fold in hilly country where the land falls northward from a Jurassic escarpment toward the broad valley of the River Soar. The first settlement was near the place where two small brooks joined; patches of gravel among the Leicestershire clay provided dry house footings and fresh spring water nearby. The settlement, which was well–established by the time of the Norman Conquest, expanded through the early medieval period. This was the time when the pattern of village streets was established and the open fields of the township (more or less the modern Parish) were laid out. Shearsby was probably at its largest in the 14th century – earthworks in several areas just outside the modern settlement show where medieval houses used to be.

The last major landscape changes happened here in the 18th century, when the open arable fields were mostly enclosed (and the modern pattern of hedges was laid out) while the village, previously connected fairly directly with its neighbours by tracks and footpaths through the fields, was by–passed by the Leicester to Northampton Turnpike. This event, 250 years ago, is what has preserved Shearsby as a quiet, rural backwater despite being so close to Leicester.

The Parish is characterised by the following environmental features, almost all of which are the result of its 2000-year land use history. Individually they may be similar to those in some other East Midlands parishes, but together they make Shearsby unique. Their protection, as a component of sustainable development, is one of the main objectives of this Plan.

- Small, compact settlement pattern
- Medieval streets, house plots and open spaces (the old crofts and allotments)
- The relationship between the brook and the settlement layout
- Tracks and paths preserving the routes of medieval tracks bypassed by the Turnpike road
- Surviving ridge and furrow (medieval open field ploughland) and shrunken village earthworks
- A relatively small number of wildlife sites and habitats connected by hedgerows.

b) Local Green Spaces

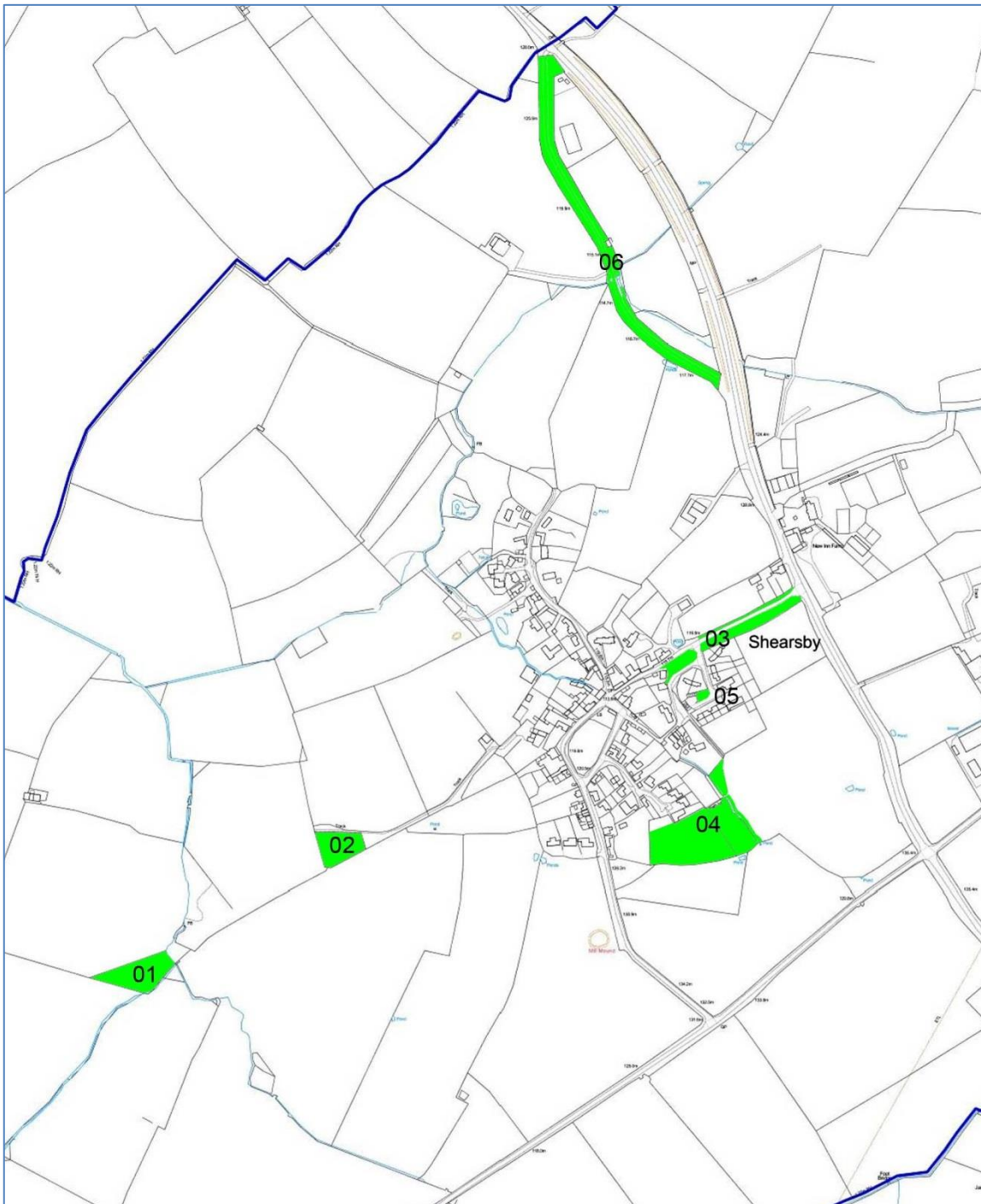
An environmental inventory (Appendix 1) of undeveloped land in the Parish was carried out in summer 2015 and May 2016. Information was compiled from existing sources (national and/or local designations, records and mapping), fieldwork and local knowledge and records, combined with the results of the consultation (open events and questionnaires) with residents conducted for this Plan.

All environmentally significant sites have been assessed and scored using the criteria for Local Green Space in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) 2012

Six sites are proposed for designation as Local Green Spaces (LGS). Their statutory protection will ensure that these six most important places in Shearsby's unique natural and human landscape are protected. The Village Green is excluded from this list as it is in the ownership of Shearsby Parish

Council and its future use as a village amenity is secured. A full inventory of these sites is provided in the supporting information (Appendices 3 and 4).

Figure 6 –Local Green Spaces



POLICY ENV 1: LOCAL GREEN SPACES – Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, any of the following identified Local Green Spaces (map above) will not be supported, other than in very special circumstances.

Thorpehill Farm Spinney west (map reference 1)

Thorpehill Farm Spinney east (02)

Back Lane verges and green areas (03)

Fenny Lane – Bear’s Hole and field (04)

Welford Road bungalows triangle (05)

Old Turnpike road (06)

c) Other significant natural environment sites

The remaining natural environment sites identified in the Inventory are all significant at the Neighbourhood level. Most are sites where habitats and species covered by national wildlife legislation are known to occur.

These four sites are formally recognised in the Plan to enable the Planning system to take them into account proactively and thus for the following Policy to be implemented whenever possible.

POLICY ENV 2: PROTECTION OF OTHER SITES OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE – The following sites identified in this Plan (figure 7) are of local significance for their wildlife and/or landscape features. They are important in their own right and are locally valued. Development proposals that affect them will be expected to protect and/or enhance their identified features.

Willow Brook Farm meadows and riparian corridor (map reference 07)

Mill Lane (13)

New Inn Farm spinney north (15)

New Inn Farm spinney and pond (16)

d) Other significant historical environment sites

The village of Shearsby is recognised by historians as being a particularly well-preserved example of a medieval settlement plan in its countryside setting. The historical environment of the whole Plan Area therefore plays a significant part in defining Shearsby's special character.

While there is already a good number of statutory historical environment protections (Listed Buildings), beneath this level there are a number of other features of at least local importance. The Inventory (Appendix 1) identified the six most significant sites with, importantly for land use planning, extant, visible expression in the modern landscape. The Plan seeks to protect them, by identifying, mapping and listing them and proposes their registration as non-designated heritage assets.

POLICY ENV 3: PROTECTION OF OTHER SITES OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE – The following sites (map below) are formally identified in this Plan as *non-designated heritage assets* for their extant and visible historical and/or archaeological features. They are important in their own right and are locally valued.

Development proposals that affect them will be expected to protect the identified features.

Medieval village earthworks, Meadowcroft (Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Record MLE21831, map reference 08)

Medieval village earthworks, west of church (MLE2347, map ref 09)

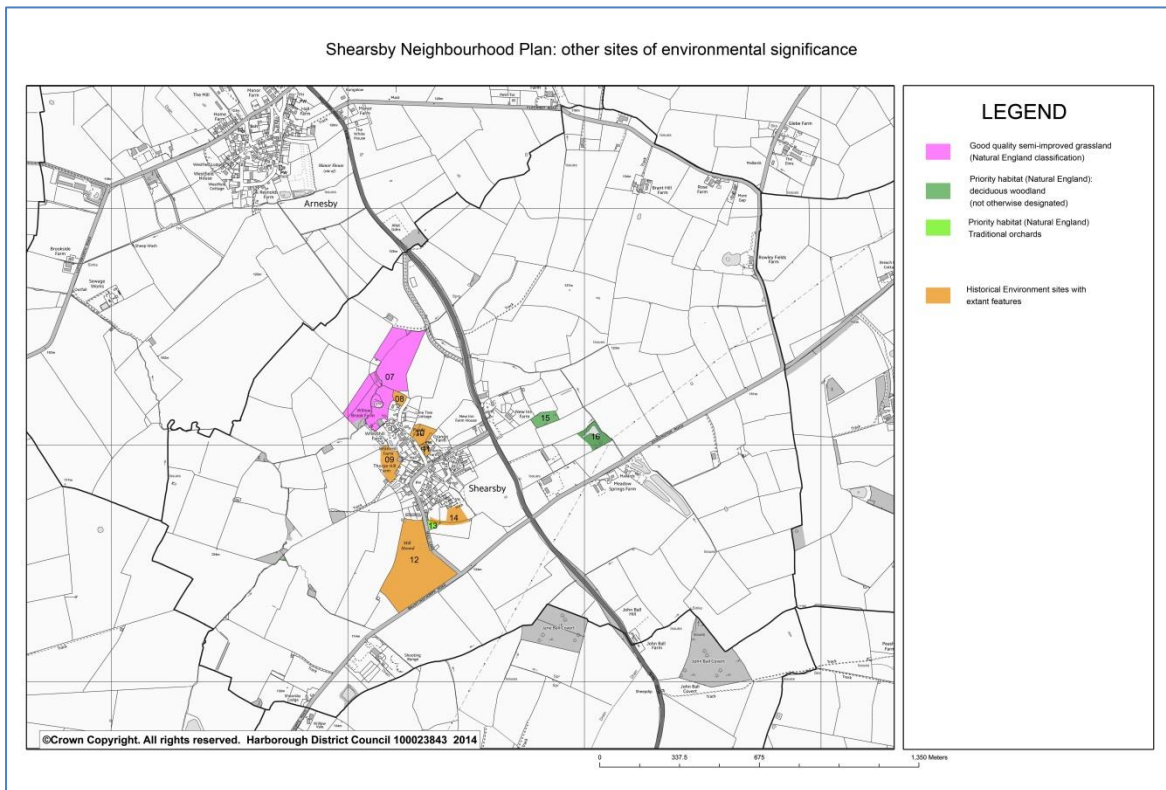
Medieval village earthworks, north of church (MLE2346, map ref 10)

St Mary Magdalene Church burial ground and mound (MLE21833, map ref 11)

Medieval village earthworks, east of Mill Lane (MLE21832, map ref 14)

Shearsby windmill field (MLE2351, map ref 12)

Figure 7 – Other sites of Environmental Significance



e) Ridge and Furrow

Ridge and furrow earthworks are the surviving traces of the medieval open field arable farming system used for at least a thousand years, up to the Enclosures of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The open fields of Shearsby were Enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1773; although there had been areas of permanent and seasonal (part of the crop rotation) grazing, most of the Parish had been arable land. Enclosure rationalised the previously piecemeal ownership of land into individual farms, while planned fields enclosed by stock-proof hedges were laid out over the old ploughlands. Because the fields became permanent grass, the old ploughland strips were preserved, and this was the situation in Shearsby until the mid-20th century, with most fields in the Parish still having ridge and furrow.

Agricultural intensification, supported by subsidies, in the second half of the 20th century led to the ploughing up of most of Shearsby's ridge and

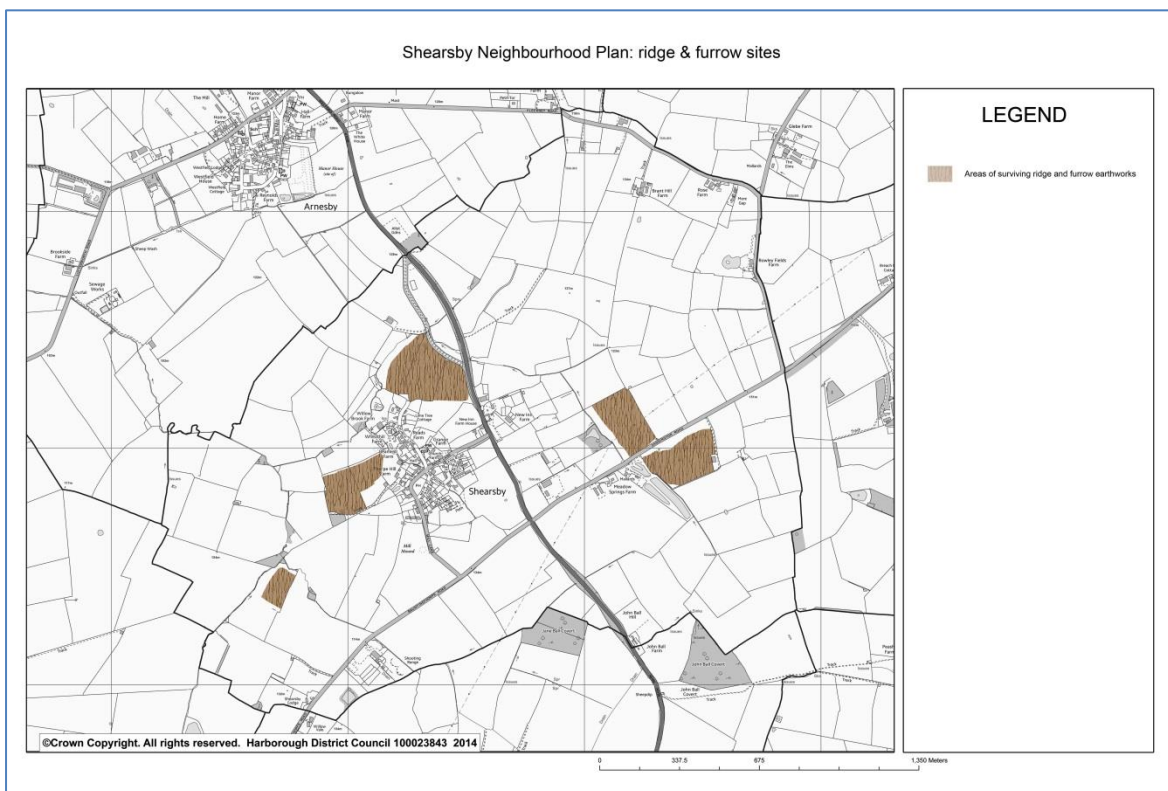
furrow. The same process happened across the Midlands and nationally. Shearsby's survival rate of just nine well-preserved ridge and furrow fields among the 100-plus fields in the Parish (9% by number, about 5% by area), is typical of the extent of loss everywhere.

Historic England (previously English Heritage), historians, archaeologists and Planning professionals now recognise the importance of protecting what little remains, wherever it survives, of this characteristically English landscape heritage feature.

POLICY ENV 4: RIDGE AND FURROW FIELDS – Development proposals that adversely affect or damage an identified surviving area of ridge and furrow earthworks (figure 8) will be resisted. Development should only take place in exceptional circumstances and a full archaeological survey will be required.

They sites are identified in the Plan as *non-designated heritage assets*.

Figure 8- Ridge and Furrow Sites



f) Hedges and trees

While farmland hedges have a degree of protection in England under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (their removal requires permission from the Local Planning Authority), there is a strong desire in Shearsby for hedgerows to be maintained as landscape features for their historical significance and biodiversity value. While the Plan does not have authority to supersede the national Regulations, it can promote action to satisfy this desire through a Community Action.

COMMUNITY ACTION ENV 3: HEDGEROWS – The Parish Council will work with landowners, farmers, funding bodies and the community to protect, enhance and manage hedged field boundaries, roadside hedges and others for the benefit of biodiversity and as valued landscape features

Shearsby is one of the least wooded Parishes in this area of Leicestershire. Community consultation showed that there is a strong desire to protect the trees and woodland that remain, for their landscape, wildlife and cultural value, and while the work of some local landowners in planting new woods is recognised there is a wish to have more of this kind of habitat creation in the Plan Area.

POLICY ENV 5: IMPORTANT TREES AND WOODLAND – Development should have regard to the trees and woodland present on the site. Where possible all trees and woodland should be preserved, where it is not possible additional planting must be included to compensate for any unavoidable loss.

COMMUNITY ACTION ENV 4: BIODIVERSITY – The Parish Council will actively seek to work with community groups, landowners, funders and other organisations to enhance the biodiversity of the Parish by creating and/or managing habitat sites (e.g. wildflower meadows, woodland, wetland) on suitable parcels of land

g) Public Rights of Way

Shearsby has a good network of popular footpaths, including several shorter routes in and around the village on historic rights of way, and part of the long-distance Leicestershire Round.

Local footpaths and bridleways are shown by the questionnaires and consultations conducted for the Plan to have high amenity value. Their contribution to physical and mental health and wellbeing are recognised nationally and locally. This is particularly true of the footpath between Shearsby and the neighbouring village of Arnesby. This allows a safe walking environment from Shearsby to the Primary School in Arnesby and the Indian Restaurant, and from Arnesby to the Shearsby public house. The maintenance and enhancement of this footpath is particularly supported.

POLICY ENV 6: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS – Development must preserve existing footpaths and where appropriate, should contribute to increased connectivity and promote sustainable travel choices, or similar.

The maintenance or improvement of public rights of way, including the footpath joining Shearsby with Arnesby, will be supported.

8. Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan will last until 2031. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Shearsby Parish Council on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in the Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be included.

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

