

Great Bowden Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Examiner's Clarification Note

This Note sets out my initial comments on the submitted Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. For the avoidance of any doubt, matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

Initial Comments

The Plan provides a distinctive vision for the neighbourhood area. The presentation of the Plan is very good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear and the maps are well-presented. The Plan is supported by a series of appendices.

The document is a very good example of a community reviewing its neighbourhood plan. The Plan captures the differences between the submitted Plan and the made Plan.

Points for Clarification

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan, and have visited the neighbourhood area. I am now able to raise issues for clarification with the District Council and the Parish Council. The comments made on the points in this Note will be used to assist in the preparation of my report and in recommending any modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. Given the nature of the Plan, the questions focus on the new policies or those with significant revisions.

Questions for the District Council

I note that the Local Plan has now been submitted for examination. At this stage, does the District Council have an anticipated timetable for the examination process and its eventual consideration of the Inspector's report?

Questions for the Parish Council

Policy G1

I note that the policy looks to future-proof its effectiveness by referring to allocations in the neighbourhood area in the emerging Local Plan. Is it the Parish Council's intention to revise the Settlement Boundary as part of its ongoing review of the Plan (as set out generally in Section 9 of the Plan)?

Policy G2

This is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the Design Guidelines and Design Codes. In the round it is a very good local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy G3

I note that part B of the policy has been properly worded so that it is applied in a proportionate way. Nevertheless, the use of the wording 'Heritage Impact Assessment and a Character Assessment' suggest that the requirements may be disproportionate for domestic and minor proposals. In this context I am minded to recommend that this part of the policy refers more generally to the submission of information on the three bullet points, and that the supporting text is expanded so that it comments about the potential need for a Heritage Impact Assessment and a Character Assessment on larger/more sensitive development proposals.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy H1

I looked at the proposed housing site carefully during the visit.

I note the work undertaken on the Site Options and Assessment (June 2024), and that Figure 5.1 identifies that the GB01 site is the only sit considered that is within the Settlement Boundary. Did the Parish Council consider that the potential development of the site could be treated simply as an infill site (on the basis of Policy H4)?

Several of the representations comment about the sensitivity of the site and the lack of a Historic Impact Statement. I note that the sensitivity of the site is addressed in the Site Options and Assessment. Furthermore, neither the policy nor the supporting text addresses this issue. How has the Parish Council addressed this matter? Is it satisfied that the development of the site can be sensitively accommodated into the built form of the village and respect its heritage assets?

Is the development of eight houses on a site of 0.79 hectares an efficient use of the land and would the development have regard to paragraph 129 of the NPPF?

Is the Parish Council satisfied that the restrictions imposed by criteria a-c of the policy will allow the development of the site to be commercially-viable?

Policy ENV1

I noted the significance of the two existing Areas of Separation during the visit.

The proposed additional Area of Separation appears to serve a different function to the two existing Areas as there are no other settlements along its northern, southern and western boundaries. I note the commentary in the paragraph of supporting text at the bottom of page 30 of the Plan. However, it would be helpful if the Parish Council elaborated further on the approach proposed in the Plan.

Policy ENV2

I looked carefully at the proposed Local Green Spaces (LGSs) during the visit. I am satisfied that the LGSs in the made Plan continue to meet the requirements for such designations in the NPPF.

I am satisfied that the proposed additional LGS meets the criteria for such designations. It is a very good example of a LGS that is well-used and supported by the community.

Policy ENV6

I note that the policy has been designed to have regard to the approach taken in paragraph 216 of the NPPF on non-designated heritage assets.

Policy ENV12

This policy reads well and is underpinned by extensive supporting text. However, does it bring any added value beyond national and local policies on flood risk?

Design Guideline and Design Codes

Section 1.6 of the document was written before the submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020 to 2041. I am minded to recommend that it is updated to reflect the current position. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Monitoring and Review

Section 9 addresses these matters in a very positive way.

Representations

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

It would be helpful if the Parish Council commented on the following representations:

- Godfrey Payton (Representation 2);
- Historic England (Representation 9);
- Leicestershire County Council (Representation 11);
- Philips Planning Service (Representation 13);
- Jelson Homes (Representation 15 and the additional letter of 22 April 2026); and
- the various comments from residents about Policy H1.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions in the Note by 27 May 2026. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

If certain responses are available before others, I am happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled, please could it come to me directly from the District Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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29 April 2026