

SHEARSBY



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW

2021-2041

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Foreword

The Parish of Shearsby is an attractive and popular place to live.

Shearsby Parish Council took the decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan to enable the local community to gain control over the shape of development in the Parish.

The Neighbourhood Plan passed Referendum on 10 January 2019 with a 93% vote in favour with a turnout of 61.1%. The Neighbourhood Plan was formally Made by Harborough District Council on January 15, 2019.

In refreshing the Made Neighbourhood Plan, we are looking to update the document in light of numerous legislative changes, including the Harborough Local Plan (Adopted April 2019) and the National planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), last updated in December 2024, to retain control over local development activity and make sure that future development is of a size, type and tenure that reflects local need. We have also taken into account the Regulation 19 version of the emerging Local Plan for Harborough, published in February 2026.

We will continue to support development that meets the requirements outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan, and to oppose development which does not take the views of local people into account and is in conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

We would like to thank Officers from Harborough District Council for their support as we have undertaken this work, to YourLocale for the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan Review based on community aspirations and for the grant funding received from Locality, without which the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan would not have been possible.

Shearsby Parish Council

1. What changes have been made?

The following changes (other than planning policy updates and formatting amendments) have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan which was Made by Harborough District Council on 15 January 2019.

The following policies relate to those in the Made Neighbourhood Plan

POLICY H1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT – The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY H2: HOUSING MIX – The policy in the Review Neighbourhood Plan has been updated following the commissioning of a Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 2) to reflect the conclusions of that document.

POLICY H3: BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES – The policy has been updated following the commissioning of a Design Guide and Codes (Appendix 1).

Policy CF1: THE RETENTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES – the policy wording has been amended to offer more detail, but the principles of the policy remain the same.

POLICY CF2: NEW OR IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES – The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY E1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES – The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan, with the exception of updating the business class use category following revision.

POLICY E2: SUPPORT FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES - The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan, with the exception of updating the business class use category following revision.

POLICY E3: RE-USE OF AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS - The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY E4: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE - The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY E5: WORKING FROM HOME - The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY ENV 1: LOCAL OPEN AREAS - The policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY ENV 3: SIGNIFICANT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SITES – This renumbered policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review replaces Policy ENV 2 in the Made Neighbourhood Plan. It is given a more precise subject title, provides new mapping based on more comprehensive and up-to-date evidence, and has new policy wording that has regard for recent changes in the NPPF including the requirement for biodiversity net gain.

POLICY ENV 5: SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SITES - This renumbered policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review replaces Policy ENV 3 in the Made Neighbourhood Plan, with a more precise subject title and new mapping based on more comprehensive and up-to-date evidence.

POLICY ENV 7: RIDGE AND FURROW – this renumbered policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review replaces Policy ENV 4 in the Made Neighbourhood Plan, It is based on a new survey and benchmark comparative data from earlier surveys to provide a stronger evidence base, and has a re-worded policy having closer regard for the relevant National Planning Policy.

POLICY ENV 8: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS – this renumbered policy in the Neighbourhood Plan Review is the same as Policy ENV 6 in the Made Neighbourhood Plan.

New Policies

POLICY ENV 2: this policy identifies and provides appropriate protection for the Open Space, Sport & Recreation sites in the Neighbourhood Area.

POLICY ENV 4: BIODIVERSITY ACROSS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA etc. – this policy adds an appropriate level of protection and enhancement for biodiversity that has not been identified site-specifically (by Policy ENV 2) and adds the requirement for biodiversity net gain. POLICY ENV 5 IMPORTANT TREES AND WOODLAND in the Made Neighbourhood Plan has been incorporated into this new policy.

POLICY ENV 6: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS – this policy provides protection at the appropriate level for buildings and structures which are not statutorily protected but are considered by the local planning authority or the community to have at least local significance.

POLICY ENV 9: IMPORTANT VIEWS – this policy maps, and provides protection for, the seven views judged by the community to be most significant for defining the particular character of Shearsby.

POLICY ENV 10: FLOOD RISK – this policy uses Environment Agency mapping of flood risk (Zones 3 and 2) and from surface water, together with recent local experience of flood events, to justify a site-specific approach to development control and mitigation.

POLICY ENV 11: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE – this policy is a response to the community's wish to make a positive but appropriate contribution to the measures needed to move toward the Government's net zero target.

2. Introduction

This is the Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan Review for Shearsby, prepared by the Shearsby Parish Council.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a type of planning document that gives local people greater control and say over how their community develops and evolves. It is an opportunity for local people to create a framework for delivering a sustainable future for the benefit of all who live or work in that community, or who visit it.

As the Plain English Guide to the Localism Act 2011 states, “Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live”.

It enables a community to create a vision and set clear planning policies for the use and development of land at the neighbourhood level to realise this vision. This includes, for example, where new homes, shops and industrial units should be built, what new buildings and extensions should look like, and which areas of land should be protected from development.

Neighbourhood Plans can be general or more detailed, depending on what local people want. They must not, however, conflict with strategic planning (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023), have regard for national planning policies and must be prepared in a prescribed manner.

All comments received through the pre-submission consultation process have been taken on board and the Neighbourhood Plan amended where appropriate. The current Neighbourhood Plan will remain in place until the review document is formally Made by Harborough District Council.

After being ‘Made’, each time a planning decision relating to development in the Parish has to be taken by Harborough District Council, or any other body, they will be required to refer to the Neighbourhood Plan Review (alongside the district’s own Local Plan and other relevant documents) and check whether the proposed development is in accordance with the policies the community has developed.

This Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of policies designed to address locally important issues.

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 the area’s character, having any effect. Decisions will instead be primarily based on the Borough’s policies rather than local criteria.

3. How the Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established through the Localism Act 2011, which set out the general rules governing their preparation. A Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the area in which it is prepared. This statutory status means that it must be taken into account when considering planning decisions affecting that area.

A Neighbourhood Plan is not prepared in isolation. It also cannot conflict with strategic planning (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023). For Shearsby, the most significant planning document is the Harborough Local Plan (April 2019). The Local Plan is being reviewed and is now at Regulation 19 stage.

Also important is the NPPF updated in December 2024. This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF requires the planning system (including Neighbourhood Plans) to promote sustainable development and details three dimensions to that development:

- An economic dimension – they should contribute to economic development;
- A social dimension – they should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the right supply of housing and creating a high quality-built environment with accessible local services;
- An environmental dimension – they should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

In addition, Neighbourhood Plans must be compatible with European Union (EU) legislation. Relevant EU obligations in relation to the Neighbourhood Planning process are those relating to Strategic Environmental Assessments, protected European Habitats and Human Rights Legislation. Although the United Kingdom has formally left the EU, these requirements remain and have been incorporated into UK law. This Plan and the policies it contains are consistent with the NPPF, Harborough Local Plan and relevant EU law which is retained following Brexit. Full details of how the Plan complies with these legislative requirements are set out in the Basic Conditions Statement (which will accompany the Submission version of this Neighbourhood Plan Review). Furthermore, these policies are specific to Shearsby and reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not intended to replace the policies contained in the Harborough Local Plan or the requirements of the NPPF. It works in conjunction with these strategic requirements to give additional, more detailed, Parish-wide specific policies that help to clarify and achieve the Community's vision. Where suitable District-wide policies already exist in the Harborough Local Plan or NPPF, they are not duplicated in this Neighbourhood Plan.

In considering development proposals, the Neighbourhood Plan takes a positive and supportive approach with a presumption in favour of the sustainable development contained in the NPPF and Harborough Local Plan.

Where there are no specific policies in this Neighbourhood Plan which are relevant to a planning

application or a development proposal, the full provisions of relevant National and District-wide planning policies will apply.

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.

4. The Plan, its vision, objectives and what we want it to achieve

The Plan area encompasses the whole of the Parish of Shearsby and covers the period up to 2041, a timescale which deliberately mirrors that for the Local Plan Review.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not intended to replace or supersede the district-wide Local Plan, but rather it sits alongside it, to add additional or more detailed policies specific to Shearsby. Where the Local Plan contains policies that meet the needs and requirements of Shearsby, they are not repeated here. Instead, it focuses on those planning issues which consultation shows matter most to the community, and to which the Neighbourhood Plan can add the greatest additional value.

It is important to note that when using the Neighbourhood Plan to form a view on a development proposal or a policy issue all of the document and the policies contained in it must be considered together.

The Plan comprises a number of key elements:

A simple and clear Vision for the Plan based on local consultation. This 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.”. This will be realised by a small number of Shearsby specific planning policies grouped around the key policy issues identified by the community as being of special importance to them. These include policies that:

- Ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations;
- Encourage the right types of development that meets local needs;
- Protect important buildings and structures;
- Protect important community facilities that are special to the local community;
- Promote good design;
- Ensure that the community continues to have good access to the surrounding countryside;
- Protect the most special environmental areas that are important to the community and/or wildlife;
- Seek ways of addressing the problems of traffic congestion and speed on our roads and the lack of parking and;
- Improve pedestrian and cycle connections within the Plan area and into the surrounding areas

The Plan will be kept under further review and may change over time in response to new and changing needs and requirements.

5. How the Plan was prepared

Consultation on the Made Neighbourhood Plan was extensive.

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 and 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 Committee 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.

On making the decision to formally review the Neighbourhood Plan in 2023, the Parish Council met on many occasions to update the plan and to consider the need to refresh the policies.

By the late spring/early summer 2024, a revised Neighbourhood Plan was ready to be put to the community.

An open event took place on 13 April 2024 which was attended by 25 residents. People used this event to comment on the draft policies, to share thoughts about design features and to consider the most appropriate locations for renewable energy infrastructure.

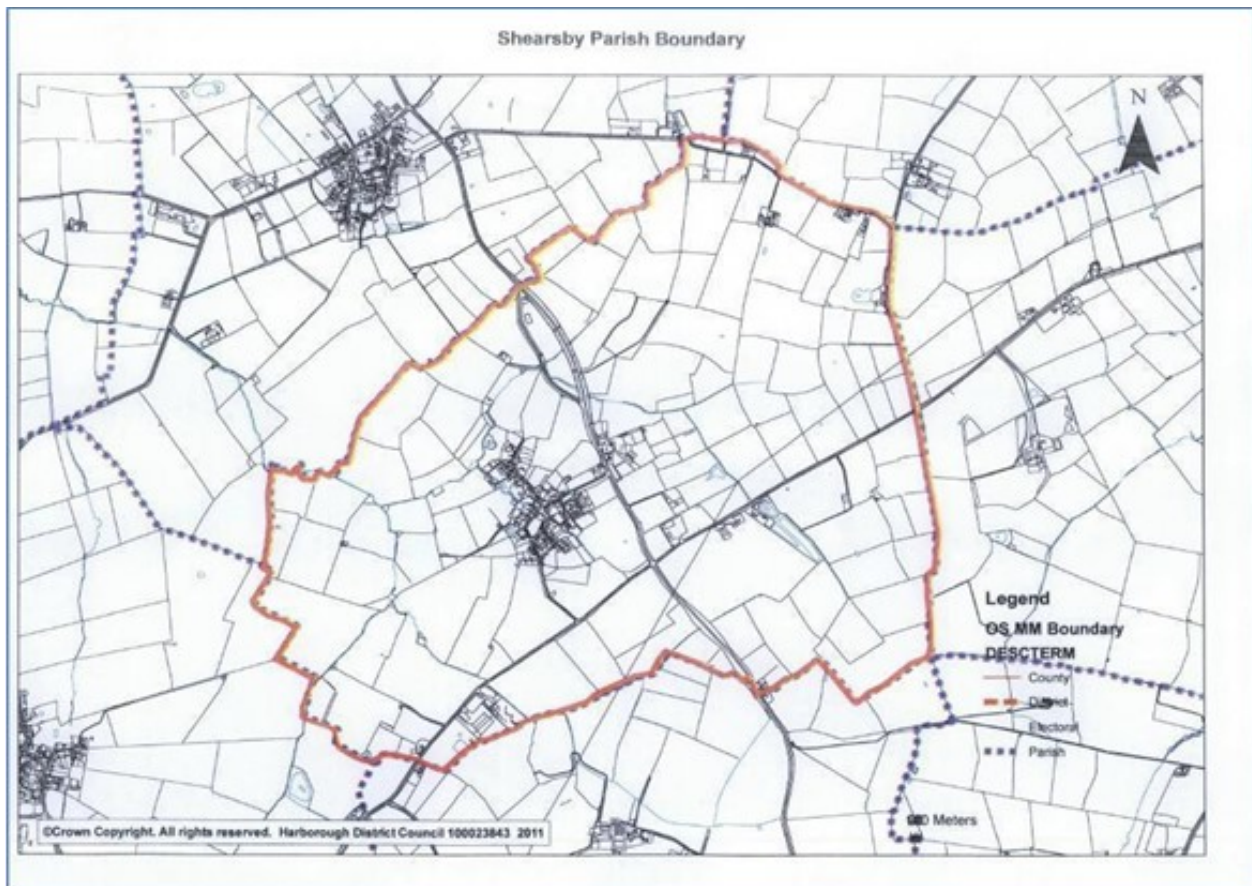
The comments received were used to amend the Neighbourhood Plan prior to formal pre-submission consultation.



6. About Shearsby

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 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.

The 2021 Census recorded 228 individuals in Shearsby, indicating a decrease of 12 people since the 2011 Census. Comparatively, the population in Harborough has increased by 14.3% during the same time period, increasing from 85,382 residents to 97,626.

There has been some development in Shearsby in recent years. Census data shows that there are 4 more dwellings in the Neighbourhood Area in 2021 compared to 2011, showing that there are now 99 dwellings.

There is a higher proportion of owned properties in Shearsby (81.0%) compared to both Harborough (75.8%) and England (61.3%), but a lower proportion of shared ownership properties than Harborough, although this is the same proportion as England.

A large proportion of dwellings in Shearsby are detached properties (70.7%). This is followed by semi-detached properties which account for a smaller share of 19.2%. The majority of households have four or more bedrooms, accounting for 36.4% of all dwellings.

Over 90% of households in Shearsby are under-occupied by at least one bedroom. This is particularly prevalent with under 65 year olds with no children and single people aged 65 and over, where 100.0% of households are under-occupying their homes.

7. Meeting the requirement for sustainable development

The NPPF (December 2024) states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: social, environmental and economic, all of which are important and interrelated:

a) Social

We have sought, through the Neighbourhood Plan review, to safeguard existing open space for the future enjoyment of residents. We are also seeking to protect existing community facilities and 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.

b) Environmental

In order to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, we are seeking to ensure that housing development is of the right type in the right location, so that it does not harm but instead positively reflects the existing historic character of the area in order to:

- Protect the parish identity and conserve the rural nature of its surroundings;
- Recognise the need to protect and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats; and
- Provide improved pedestrian connectivity.

c) Economic

Whilst the built-up parts of the parish of Shearsby are primarily residential, there is a small commercial and retail element within the parish and a desire to ensure that appropriate economic activity is maintained as long as the local infrastructure supports it. We therefore wish to encourage employment opportunities in our area by:

- Supporting appropriate existing business development and expansion where the local infrastructure would not be adversely affected by the proposals; and
- Encourage start-up businesses and home working.

This document sets out local considerations for delivering sustainable development across Shearsby Parish.

8. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

A: Housing

Housing Provision

The Shearsby Neighbourhood Plan is a key part of securing sustainable development as described in Section 2 of the NPPF (2024) which states that all plans should provide a positive vision for the future of its area and provide ‘a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings’. (Paragraph 15).

When considering development proposals, the Plan takes a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Through the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan, consideration has been given to the type and extent of new development required to meet the needs of the local community, where it should be located in the Parish, and how it should be designed.

As the Harborough Local Plan (2019) states ‘The full objectively assessed housing need for the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA is 4,829 dwellings per annum between 2011 and 2031 (96,580 total) and for Harborough District is 532 dwellings per annum between 2011 and 2031 (HEDNA), giving a total plan requirement across the 20-year plan period of 10,640 dwellings’. (Paragraph 5.1.3).

The Local Plan incorporates a 20% buffer and therefore makes provision for 12,800 dwellings from 2011 to 2031. Of this, 8,150 dwellings have already been built or committed (through the granting of planning permission, or through allocation in neighbourhood plans) leaving a residual requirement of 4,650 dwellings up to 2031.

The Harborough District Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22 (published March 2023) updated these figures as follows ‘During the 2021/22 monitoring period 1,026 new dwellings were completed, of which 231 were Affordable Homes: 66 Social Rented, 68 Affordable Rented and 97 Shared Ownership’ (Paragraph 4.2).

The Local Plan (April 2019) establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for development. On the basis of this hierarchy, Shearsby is classified as an ‘Other Village or Rural Settlement’ which the Local Plan describes as ‘the least sustainable locations for growth and are covered by housing in the countryside policy. New housing will be limited to small sites to meet a locally identified need (either through a housing needs survey or neighbourhood plan), housing to meet the needs of a rural worker, isolated homes in the countryside ... and replacement dwellings’.

The Neighbourhood Plan Review covers a period up to 2041, to reflect the timescales in the Local Plan Review.

After careful consideration, the Shearsby parish Council decided not to allocate a site for residential development, but to retain the Limits to Development which had been relaxed during the preparation of the Made Neighbourhood Plan in order to facilitate housing growth in the most sustainable locations.

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 retains the Limits to Development for the village of Shearsby that were designated in the Made Neighbourhood Plan. The Limits to Development is shown in figure 2 below and was originally developed following consultation.

Focusing limited development in the village of Shearsby helps 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 helps 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, many 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.

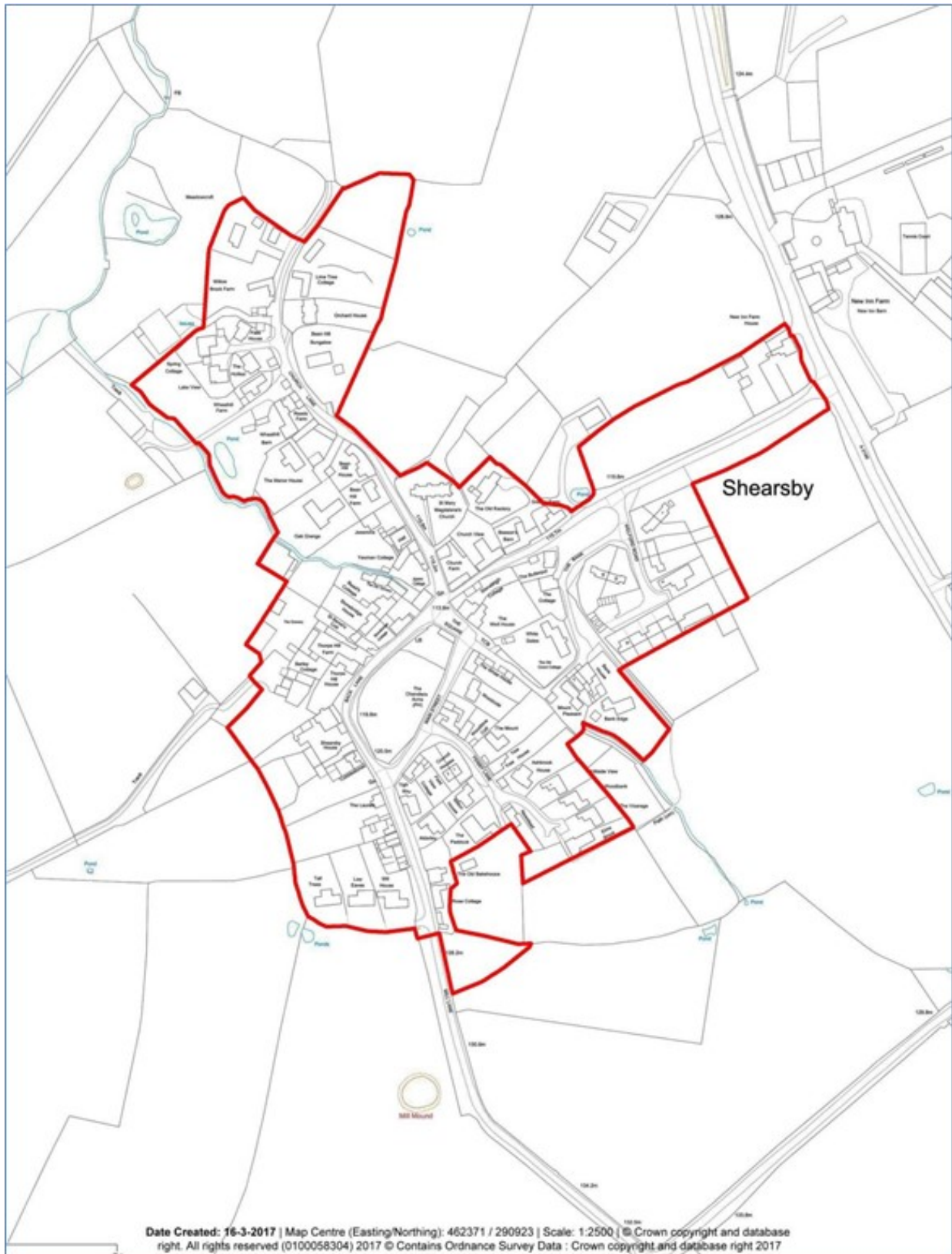
Methodology

The Limits to Development were originally 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.

Figure 2: Shearsby Limits to Development



POLICY H1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT - Within the defined Limits to Development as shown in Figure 2, development proposals for small scale (up to 5 units) or infill development (up to 2 units) and the conversion of existing buildings will be looked on sympathetically where it:

- a) Is small scale, and reflects the size, character and level of service provision available within Shearsby;
- b) Helps meet a clearly identified housing need for Shearsby or the wider Parish;
- c) Retains existing natural boundaries such as trees, hedges and streams which either contribute to visual amenity or are important for their ecological value;
- d) Preserves or enhances the setting of any heritage asset it may affect;
- e) Preserves or enhances any setting or character of Shearsby Conservation area it may affect, in line with the Conservation Area Appraisal;
- f) Provides proportionate off-road parking in line with Leicestershire County Council Highways requirements;
- g) Does not reduce garden/green space creating substantial, adverse effect upon the special character of the area or the residential amenities of future occupiers of the proposed development or that of existing/future occupiers of adjacent properties.

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.

A Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned as part of the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan review.

The Housing Needs Assessment identified that between 2011 and 2021, there has been no change in the proportion of owned properties in Shearsby, with 81 owned properties in 2011 and 2021. The number of rented properties has also increased by 1 property, from 8 to 9, representing an increase of 12.5%. Meanwhile, larger increases can be seen in socially rented properties, with the proportion of socially rented properties increasing by 80.0%, from 5 to 9 properties.

Over 30% of the dwellings in Shearsby have 4+ bedrooms. This is followed closely by 3-bedroom properties, which account for 36.4% of properties. 2-bedroom dwellings account for 23.2% of properties whilst 1-bedroom dwellings account for a significantly smaller proportion of properties at 3.0%. Whilst the overall pattern remains similar between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of 2-bedroom properties has increased whilst the proportion of 3 and 4+ bedroom properties has decreased.

In Shearsby there is a lower proportion of one person households (24.5%) compared to both Harborough (26.0%) and England (30.1%). However, within this category, there is a larger proportion of one person households aged 66 and over (18.4%), compared to Harborough (13.2%) and England (12.8%). There is a higher proportion of one family only households (71.4%) compared to Harborough (69.6%) and England (63.1%). Within this category there is a larger proportion of households aged 66 and over and with no children compared to wider regions, whilst there is a lower proportion of families with dependent children compared to the district and national averages.

Under-occupation is high, with over 90% of all households under-occupied by at least one bedroom. Under-occupancy is at a level of 100% amongst single people aged over 65.

In order to provide a more appropriate housing mix by the end of the plan period, the Housing Needs Assessment recommends giving priority to dwellings with three or fewer bedrooms, with only limited need for larger dwellings.

A detailed Housing Needs Assessment is provided as Appendix 1.

POLICY H2: HOUSING MIX - Where practicable and viable, new housing development proposals should provide a mixture of housing types specifically to meet identified and evidenced local needs. In this context proposals that deliver smaller homes (three bedrooms or fewer) and homes suitable for older people (especially those who wish to downsize) will be particularly supported.

There will be a presumption against dwellings providing 4 or more bedrooms unless there is a proven housing need.

Design

The purpose of having a policy on design is to help ensure that Shearsby 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.

The Parish's long history means that it has a rich and diverse variety of buildings of differing styles and design, and generally of high quality. This adds greatly to the distinctive character and charm of the Parish.

Many of the buildings have been recognised as being of national importance. Many structures have been granted 'Listed Building' status by the Government.

Much of the traditional core of the village of Shearsby is protected by Conservation Area status reflecting its special architectural and historic interest.

Generally, the design of buildings (including new build) in the Parish is good and is sympathetic to its distinctive character and appearance.

The NPPF notes that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails

to reflect local design policies. (Paragraph 139)

Harborough Local Plan (April 2019) Policy GD8 seeks to achieve a high quality of design to help ensure that development is sustainable and attractive. Neighbourhood Plan Review Policy H4 adds local detail to this by demonstrating what constitutes good quality design in Shearsby.

The Plan seeks to ensure that all development proposals (including minor works) are of good quality and designed sensitively to ensure that the generally good-quality built environment of the Parish is maintained and enhanced, particularly where they are located within or in close proximity to the Conservation Areas and/or a Listed Building or its setting. New designs should respond in a positive way to the local character through careful and appropriate layout use of high-quality materials and detail. Proposals should also demonstrate consideration of height, scale and massing, to ensure that new development delivers a positive contribution to the street scene and adds value to the distinctive character of the area in which it is proposed to be situated.

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 development proposals should demonstrate a high quality of design, layout and use of materials which make a positive contribution to the special character of the Neighbourhood Area, and follow the recommendations in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan where appropriate.

Any new development application should make specific reference to how the design guide and codes (Appendix 2) has been taken into account in the design proposals. Any deviation from the design guide and codes should be justified.

New development should consider the prevailing character area in which the proposal resides and seek to contribute to and enhance the existing character.

C: The Natural and Historical Environment

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’s 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 still show where the medieval houses and streets 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.

1. Local Open Areas

An environmental inventory (Appendix 3) 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

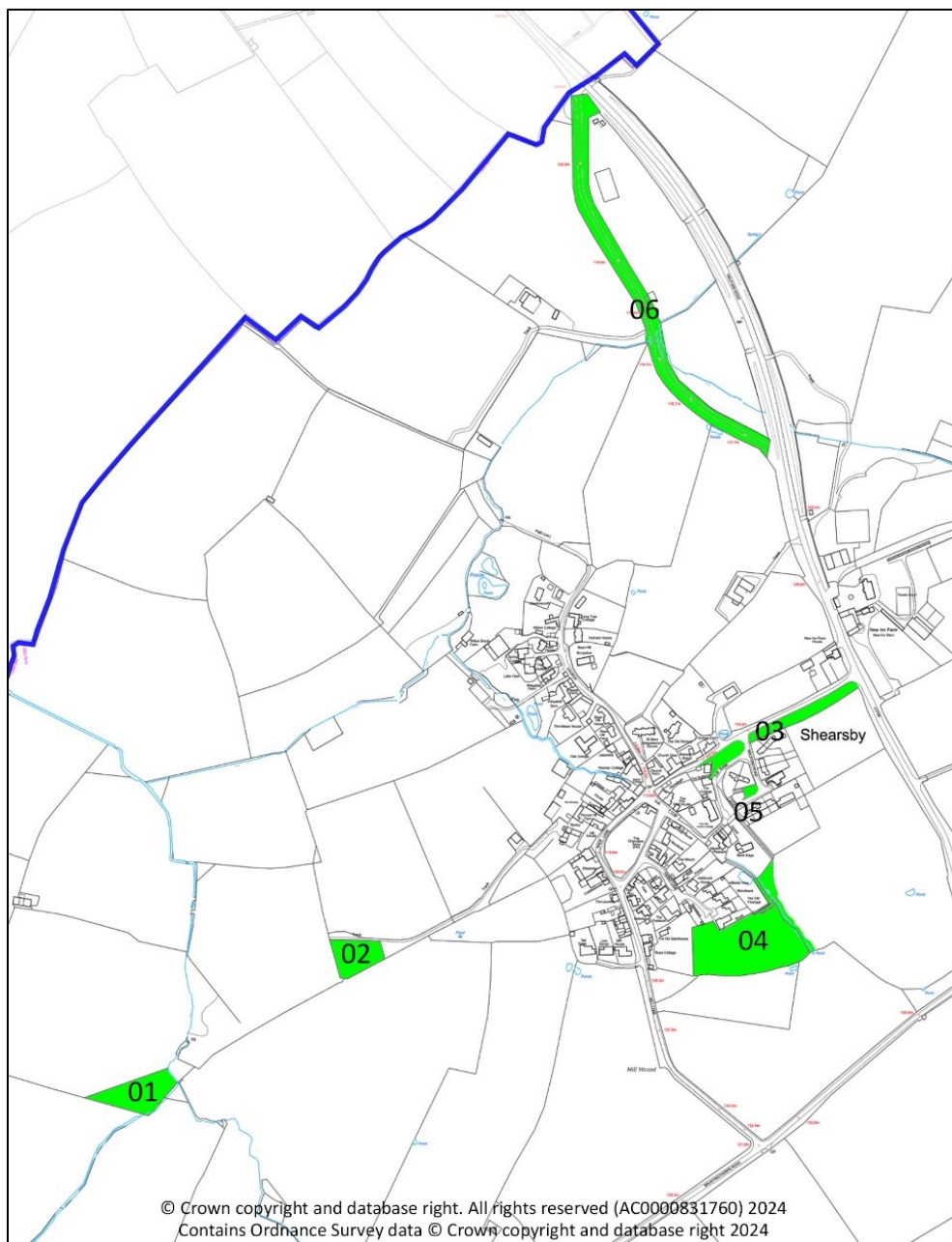
designations, records and mapping), fieldwork and local knowledge and records, combined with the results of the consultations (open events and questionnaires) with residents conducted for this Plan.

All environmentally significant sites were assessed and scored using the criteria for Local Green Space in the *NPPF* (December 2024, paragraph 107).

Six sites were designated as Local Open Areas in the 2017 Neighbourhood Plan on the recommendation of its Examiner; no material changes have occurred between 2017 and 2024, so this Review Neighbourhood Plan endorses the designations. This will ensure that these six most important places in Shearsby's unique natural and human landscape continue to be protected for future generations. Supporting evidence is provided in Appendix 4.

Note: Shearsby Village Green is not covered by this policy as it is in the ownership of Shearsby Parish Council and its future use as a village amenity is thereby secured (see Policy ENV 2).

Figure 3 –Local Open Areas



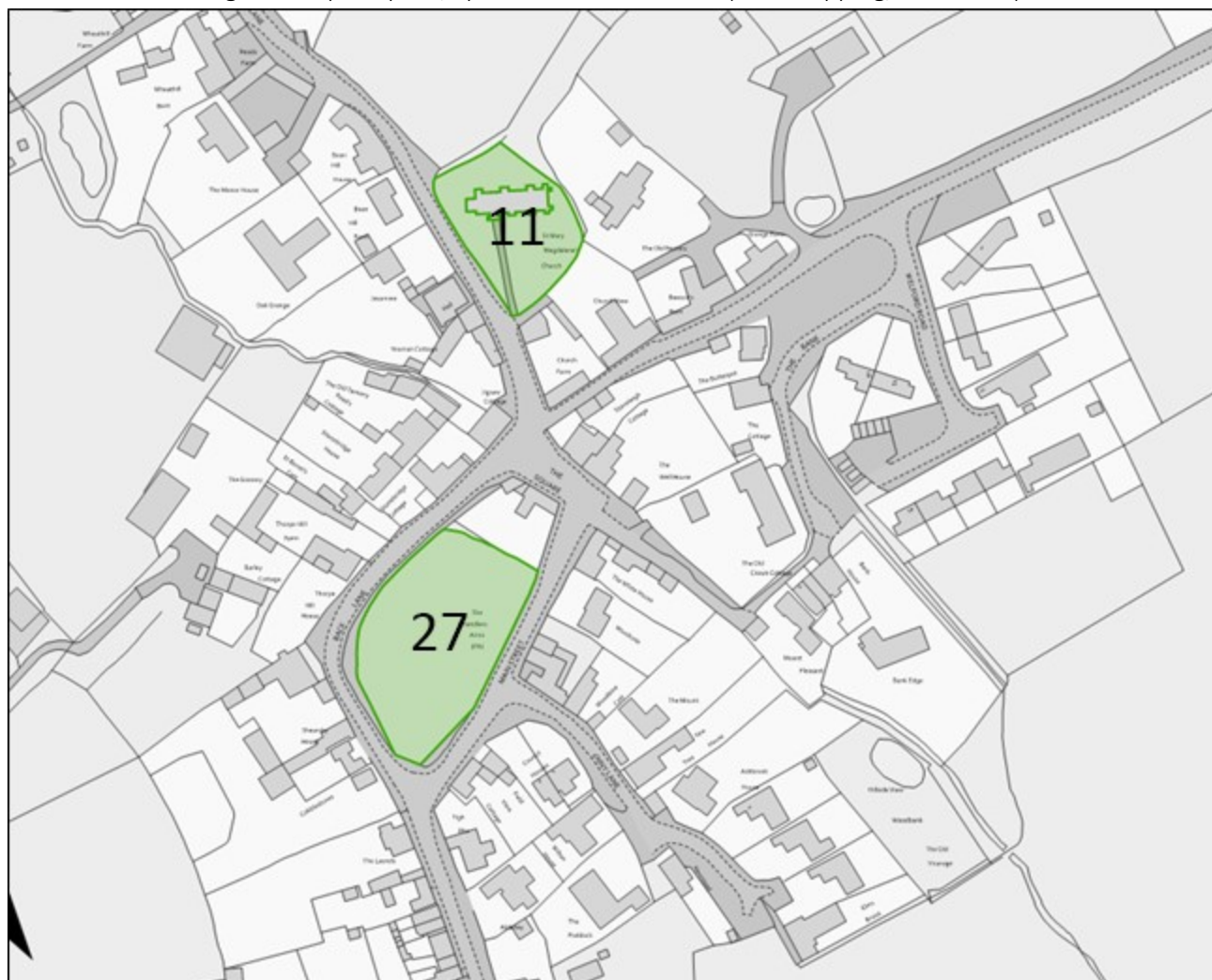
POLICY ENV 1: Local Open Areas- Development proposals that would result in the loss, or have an unacceptably adverse effect on the open character, of any of the following areas, shown in Figure 3, will not be supported.

- 01 Thorpehill Farm spinney (west)
- 02 Thorpehill Farm spinney (east)
- 03 Back Lane verges and green areas
- 04 Bear’s Hole and the field behind Elmsbrook at the top of Fenny Lane
- 05 Welford Road bungalows triangle
- 06 Old Turnpike Road

2. Open Space, Sport and Recreation sites

Two open spaces in Shearsby are Open Space, Sport & Recreation (OSSR) sites in the Harborough District Council Open Spaces audit and are shown on the HDC Local Plan (2019) Policies Map. Their value as open spaces within and close to the built-up areas and/or their current, or potential, value, as community resources is recognised in Policy ENV 2. The policy adds local detail to, and is in conformity with, HDC Policy G12; it has regard for NPPF (December 2024) paragraph 104.

Figure 4: Open Space, Sport & Recreation sites (HDC mapping, annotated)



POLICY ENV 2: OPEN SPACE, SPORT & RECREATION SITES – The following open spaces within or close to the built-up area (locations, figure 4; details appendix 3) are of high local value for sport, recreation and/or amenity. Development proposals that result in their loss, or have a significant adverse effect on them, will not be supported unless the open space will be replaced by at least equivalent provision in an equally suitable location, or if it can be demonstrated that the open space is no longer required by the community.

11 St Mary’s Churchyard (HDC Open Space; *Churchyards and cemeteries*)

27 Village green and play area (HDC Open Space; *Play space (children) and Amenity Greenspace*)

Significant natural environment sites

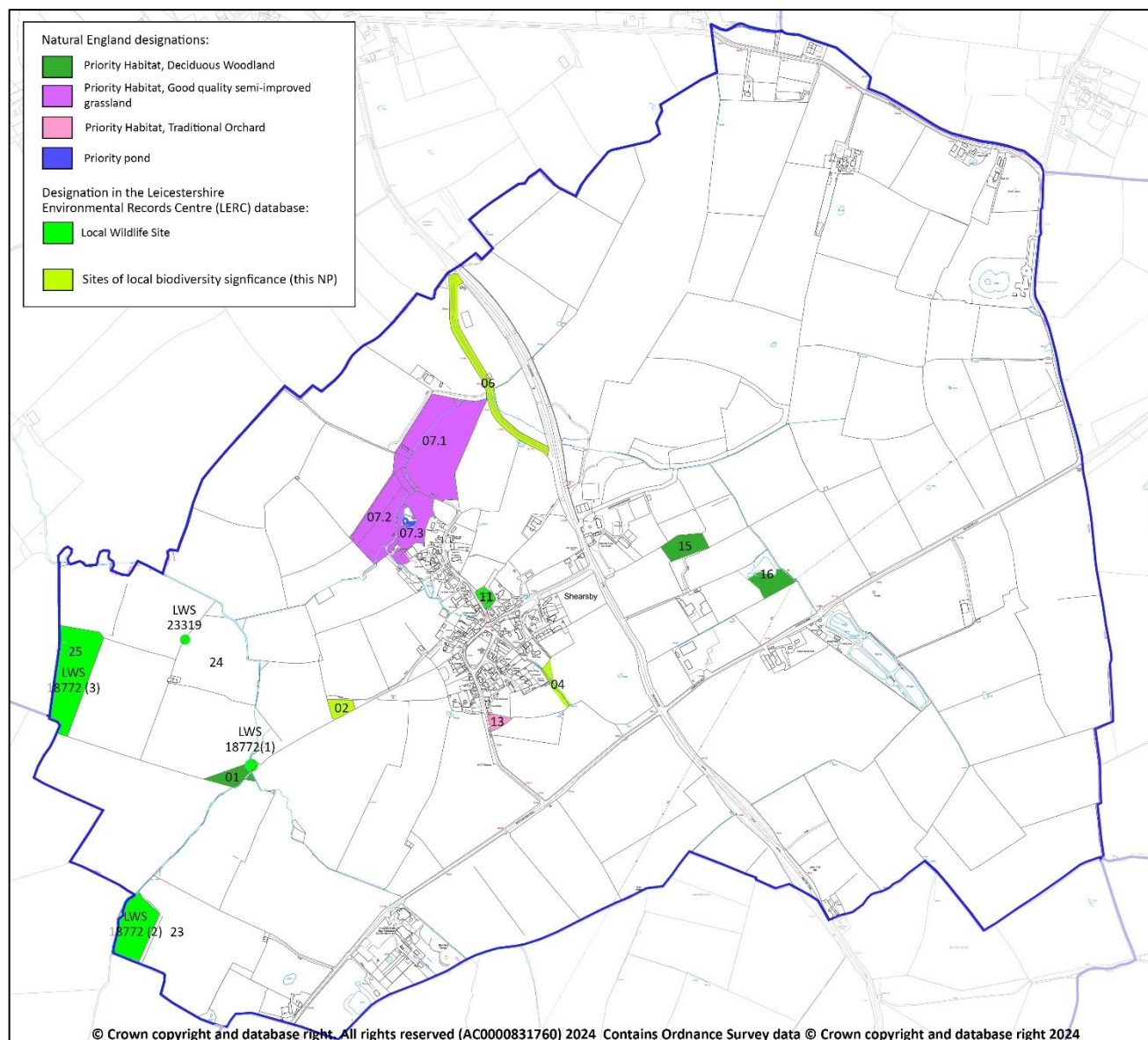
The work of drafting the Review Neighbourhood Plan included a review of existing and potential natural environment site designations. It identified, confirmed and described the habitats, species records and features of 15 sites of significance for wildlife (biodiversity) in the Shearsby Neighbourhood Area. Figure 5 shows their locations. They comprise sites where Natural England priority habitats occur, where Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) have been designated by the Leicestershire Environmental Record Centre; and several further sites identified during the preparation of the Plan as being of at least local biodiversity significance in the context of the Neighbourhood Area. Together, these sites are essential for biodiversity conservation in the Parish.

Policy ENV 3 delivers site-specific compliance in the Neighbourhood Area with the relevant HDC Local Plan policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the Habitats and Species Regulations 2017-2019, and the UK Environment Act 2021. It has regard for NPPF 2024 policies 185 and 186.

POLICY ENV 3: SIGNIFICANT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SITES – The sites and features mapped in figure 5 have been identified as being of local or greater significance for the natural environment. They are ecologically important in their own right and are locally valued. Development proposals on the identified sites will not be supported unless they include evidence-based, measurable proposals for delivering *biodiversity net gain* at a minimum 10%.

If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through relocating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or dealt with through onsite or offsite enhancement (via biodiversity net gain at a minimum of 10%) or compensation, planning permission should be refused, having regard for paragraph 193a of the NPPF.

Figure 5 –Significant Natural Environment Sites



Biodiversity across the Neighbourhood Area, woodland, trees and hedgerows

Biodiversity: Although the agricultural history of the Area means that there are no nationally significant wildlife sites and relatively few of county level importance, this Plan has identified 14 parcels of land for individual notice and protection in the Planning system. The rest of the open countryside – pasture fields and arable margins, open spaces, gardens, roadside verges, individual trees, woodland and hedgerows – has biodiversity value, and previously such locations were thought to have ‘relatively little of significance to be taken into account in the Planning system’, allowing development to be diverted harmlessly to them without affecting biodiversity. This was a misunderstanding of the concept of biodiversity. England’s biodiversity is entirely and only the sum of the wildlife in all parts of all of its individual parishes: low biodiversity makes net improvement more difficult at a national scale, while any further reduction inevitably produces more incremental net loss. Local people want this Neighbourhood Plan’s policies (which include the measures for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), introduced

to the NPPF in 2024 to be applied rigorously across the whole Neighbourhood Area, to ensure it plays its essential part in protecting what remains of England's threatened and diminishing biodiversity.

Woodland, trees and hedgerows: Shearsby is one of the least wooded Parishes in this part 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 protect what remains and to have more of this kind of habitat creation in the Plan Area.

While farmland hedges have a degree of protection in England under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, there is a strong desire in Shearsby for hedgerows to be maintained as landscape features for their historical significance and biodiversity value.

POLICY ENV 4: BIODIVERSITY ACROSS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA – All new development proposals in the Neighbourhood Area will be expected to safeguard habitats and species, including those of local significance, and to deliver biodiversity net gain. If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through relocating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or dealt with through onsite or offsite enhancement (via biodiversity net gain of at least 10%) or compensation, planning permission should be refused, having regard for paragraph 186a of the NPPF.

Woodland, notable trees and hedges of arboricultural, biodiversity and landscape importance should be protected from loss or damage in development proposals, and where possible integrated into their design. Proposals which use trees and hedges to enhance their appearance, amenity and biodiversity value will be supported. Development proposals adversely affecting trees and hedges should be accompanied by a tree survey (BS5837 or its current equivalent) to establish their health and longevity. Where damage or loss is unavoidable, the developer should provide or arrange for replacement trees and/or hedges of at least equivalent quantity, type and/or scale to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain.

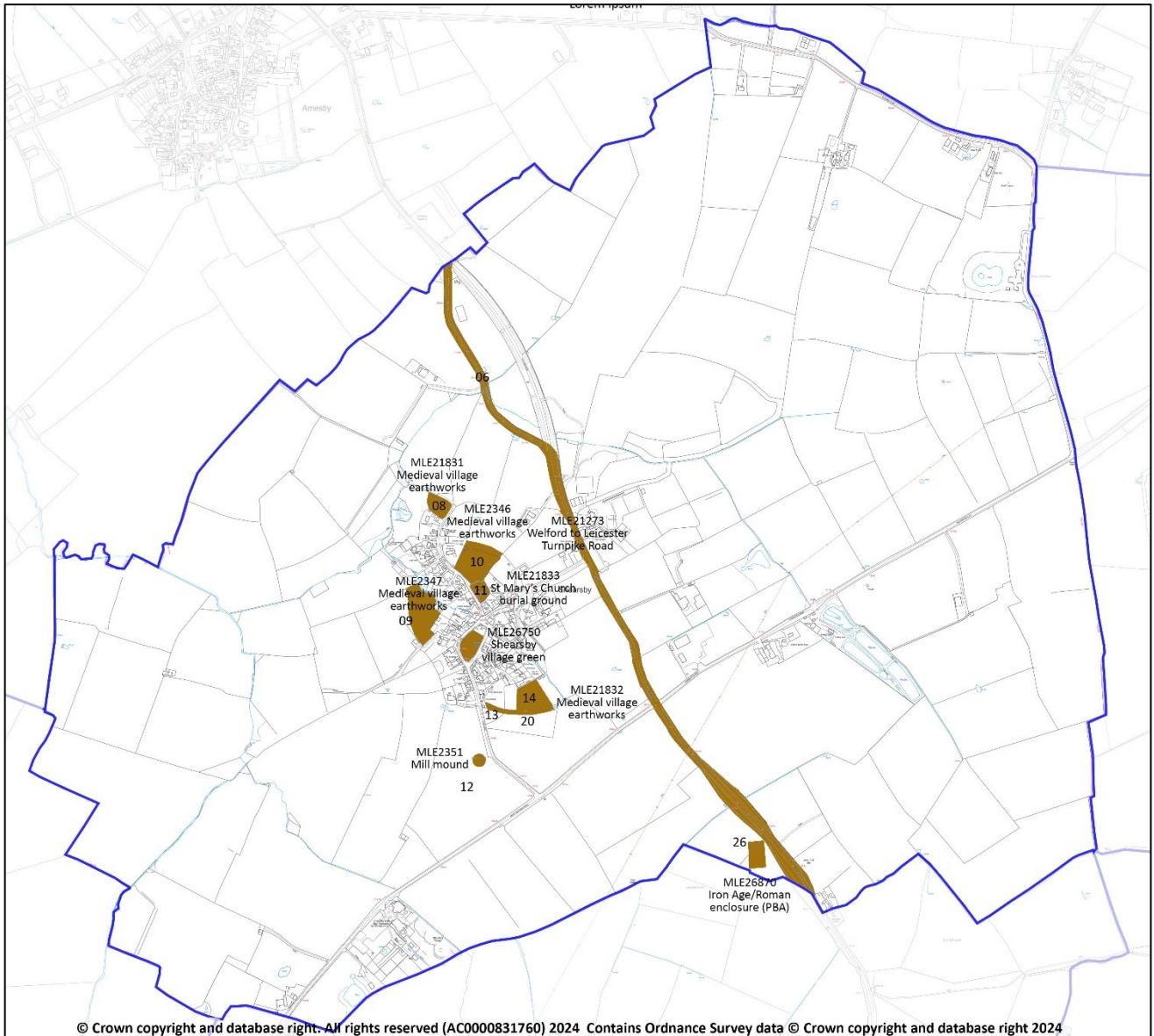
Significant historic environment sites

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 Neighbourhood Area therefore plays a significant part in defining Shearsby's special character.

A number of sites in the Neighbourhood Area are important for (at least local) heritage and history. They comprise sites and features of relevance to Neighbourhood Plan policies in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Historic England databases, and a further set identified (from fieldwork and local history publications and knowledge) in the preparation of the Plan. The map (figure 6) shows their locations.

POLICY ENV 5: SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SITES - The sites mapped in figure 6 (details in Appendix 3) are of at least local significance for their historical features. The features are extant and have visible expression or there is proven buried archaeology on the site, and they are locally valued. Development proposals adversely affecting them will only be supported if the benefits of the development can be shown to outweigh the value of the heritage assets.

Figure 6 – Significant Historic Environment Sites



Non-designated Heritage Assets: locally significant buildings

While there are eight Listed Buildings in the Neighbourhood Area (mapped here for recognition and protection of their *settings*), the Neighbourhood Plan does not need a policy for them as they already have statutory protection in the Planning system at national level.

However, this Plan includes Policy ENV 6 for the recognition and protection of buildings of local significance below that afforded to Listed Buildings. Leicestershire County Council recognises eleven buildings and structures of local historic significance (as 'non listed historic buildings') in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER). Inclusion of the buildings in this Plan consolidates them in the planning system as Non-designated Heritage Assets in order that they can be afforded protection at the appropriate level, having regard for NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 202, 210 and 212.

Note that Leics. HER record MLE19051 Outbuilding, Yew Tree House, Fenny Lane relates to a building

styles in the villages and Neighbourhood Area, and their features and settings will be protected wherever possible. Their significance as heritage assets will need to be balanced against the benefits of a development proposal (or of a change of use requiring planning approval) affecting them.

Assets in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) as *non-listed historic buildings*:

MLE18559 Shearsby Baths as *'a tall white two-bay house with lower two-bay attachment, all that remains of the Shearsby Spa'*

MLE27647 K6 telephone box, The Square

MLE27648 Water pump, The Square

MLE27655 Shearsby House, Back Lane

MLE27656 Field View Cottage, Main Street

MLE27657 Thorpe Hill House, Back Lane

MLE27658 The Chandlers, Fenny Lane

MLE27659 The Old Bakery, Mill Lane

MLE27660 Beeson's Barn, Back Lane

MLE27661 Fingerpost on corner of Back Land and Church Lane

MLE27662 Former Village School (now Hall), Church Lane

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 to 19th 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 (Figure 8.1). 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 (Figure 8.2). The same process happened across the Midlands and nationally, as shown in figure 8.3, which shows the surviving areas in 2024 as mapped using available surface height mapping (LIDAR), Google Earth imagery and fieldwork for checking. Shearsby's survival rate of 19 ridge and furrow fields among the 100-plus fields in the Parish (19% by number, about 8% by area), is typical of (perhaps slightly better than) the extent of loss everywhere (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.1 – Ridge and Furrow sites, c.1947
 Mapped by RF Hartley, Leics CC, from RAF aerial photography

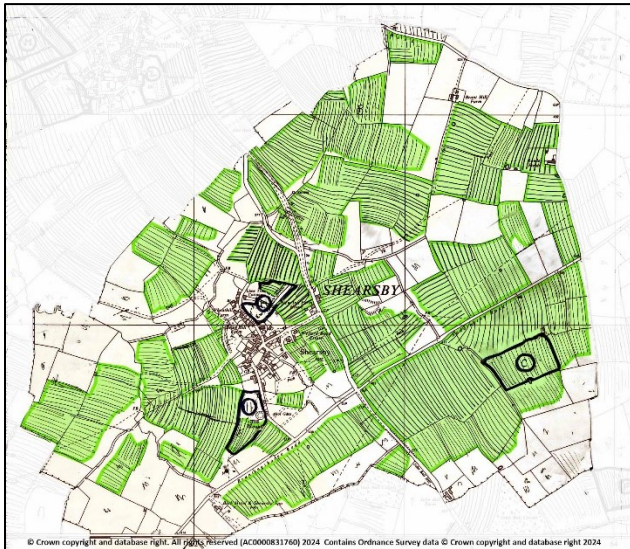


Figure 8.2 – Ridge and Furrow sites, c.1999
 English Heritage *Turning the Plough* survey

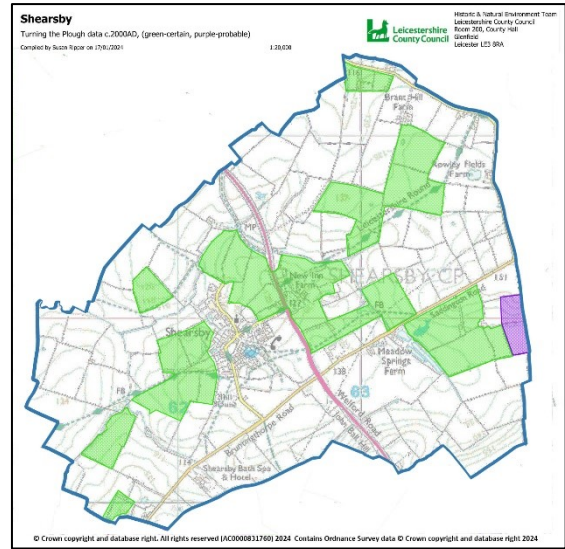
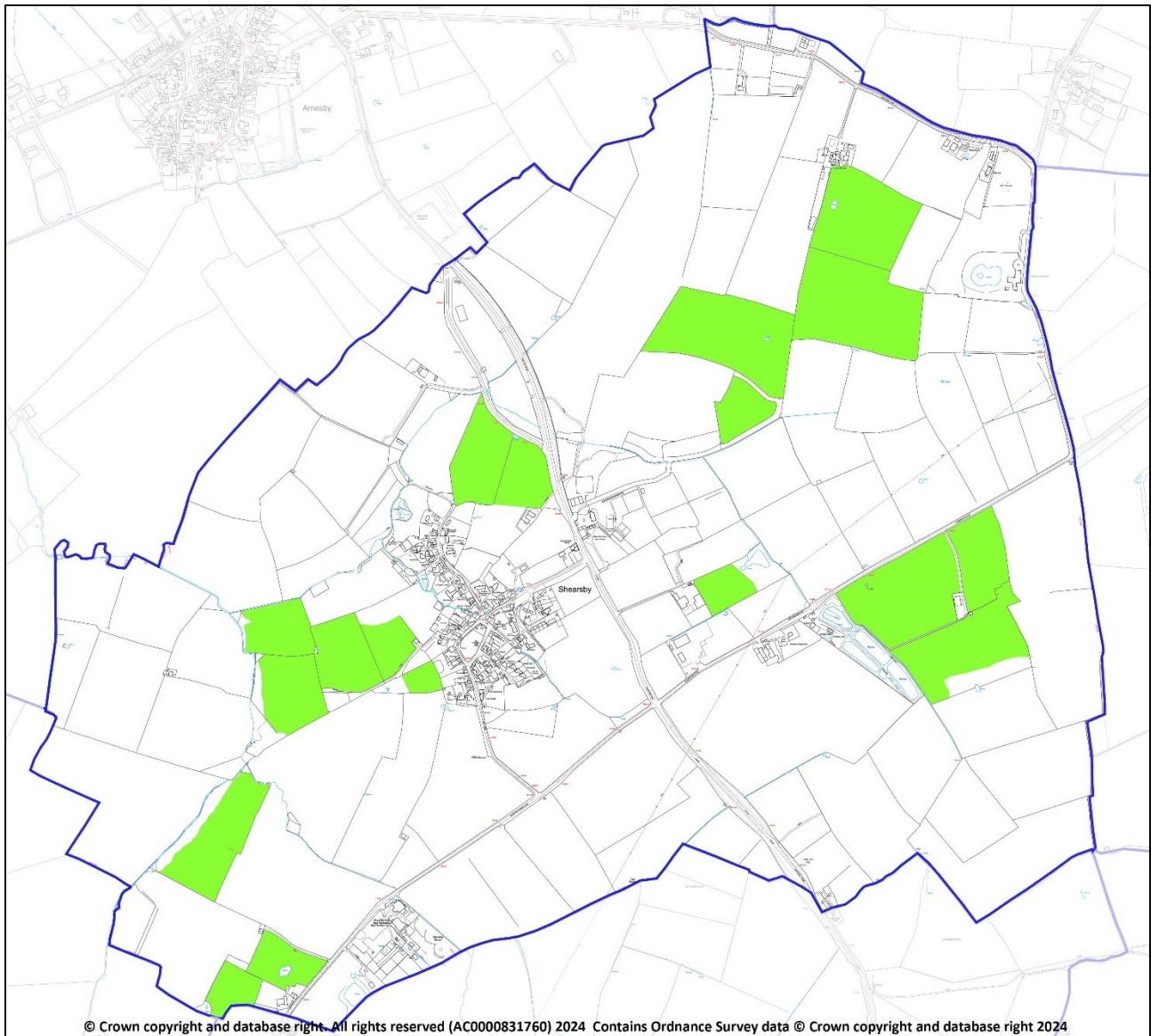


Figure 8.3 – Ridge and Furrow sites, 2024



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.

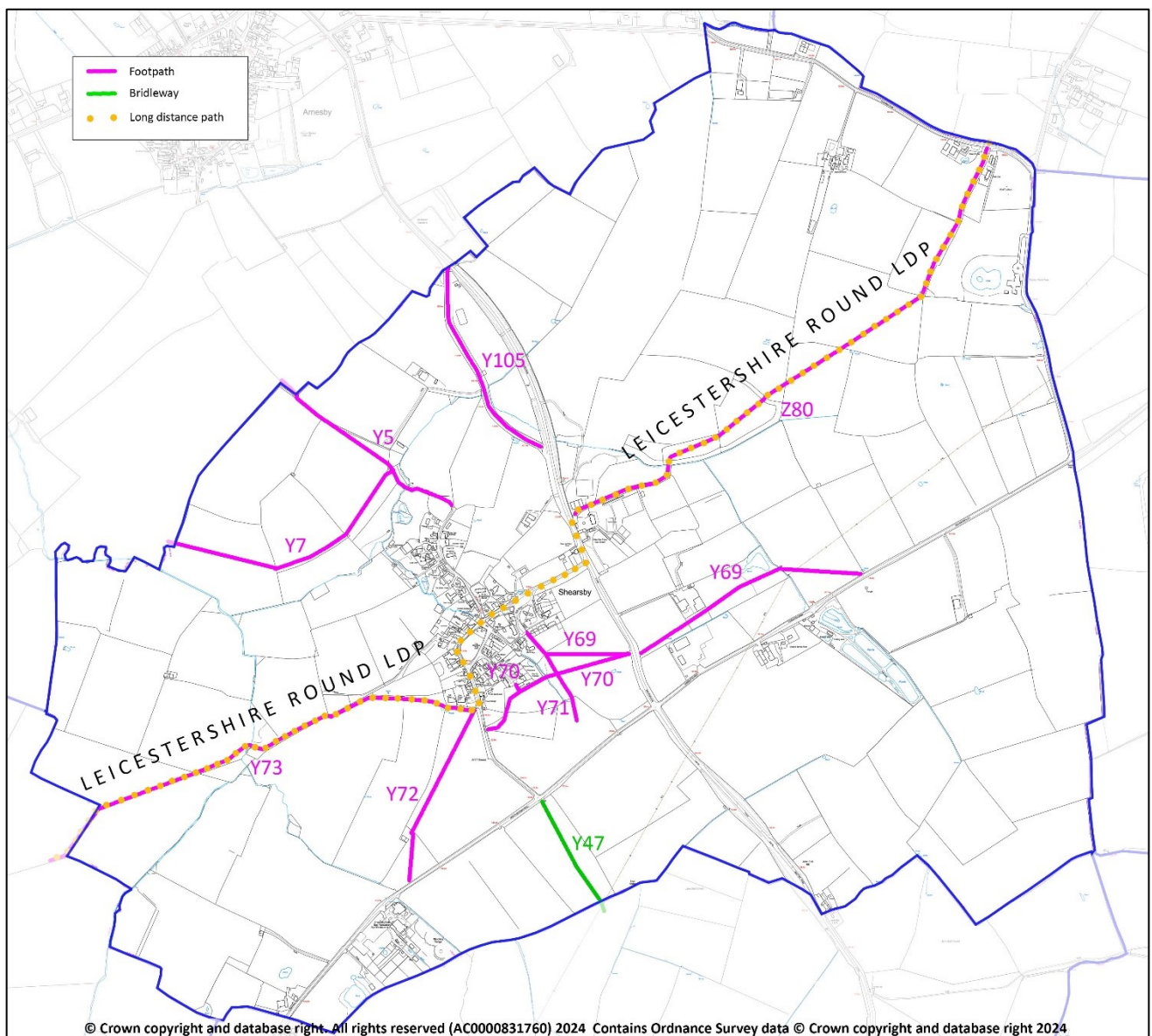
POLICY ENV 7: RIDGE AND FURROW FIELDS - The areas of ridge and furrow earthworks mapped in figure 8.3 are non-designated heritage assets.

Any loss or damage arising from a development proposal (or a change of land use requiring planning permission) is to be avoided; the significance of the ridge and furrow features as heritage assets must be balanced against the benefits of the development.

Footpaths and bridleways

Shearsby has a good network of popular footpaths (Figure 9), including several shorter routes in and around the village on historic rights of way, and a section of the Leicestershire Round long-distance footpath.

Figure 9: Footpaths and bridleways



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 footpath Y5 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 8: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS – Development proposals shall preserve existing Public Rights of Way and where possible provide for the improved maintenance and connectivity of the existing Public Rights of Way network, supporting sustainable modes of transport and travel choices, including the Public Right of Way between Shearsby and Arnesby.

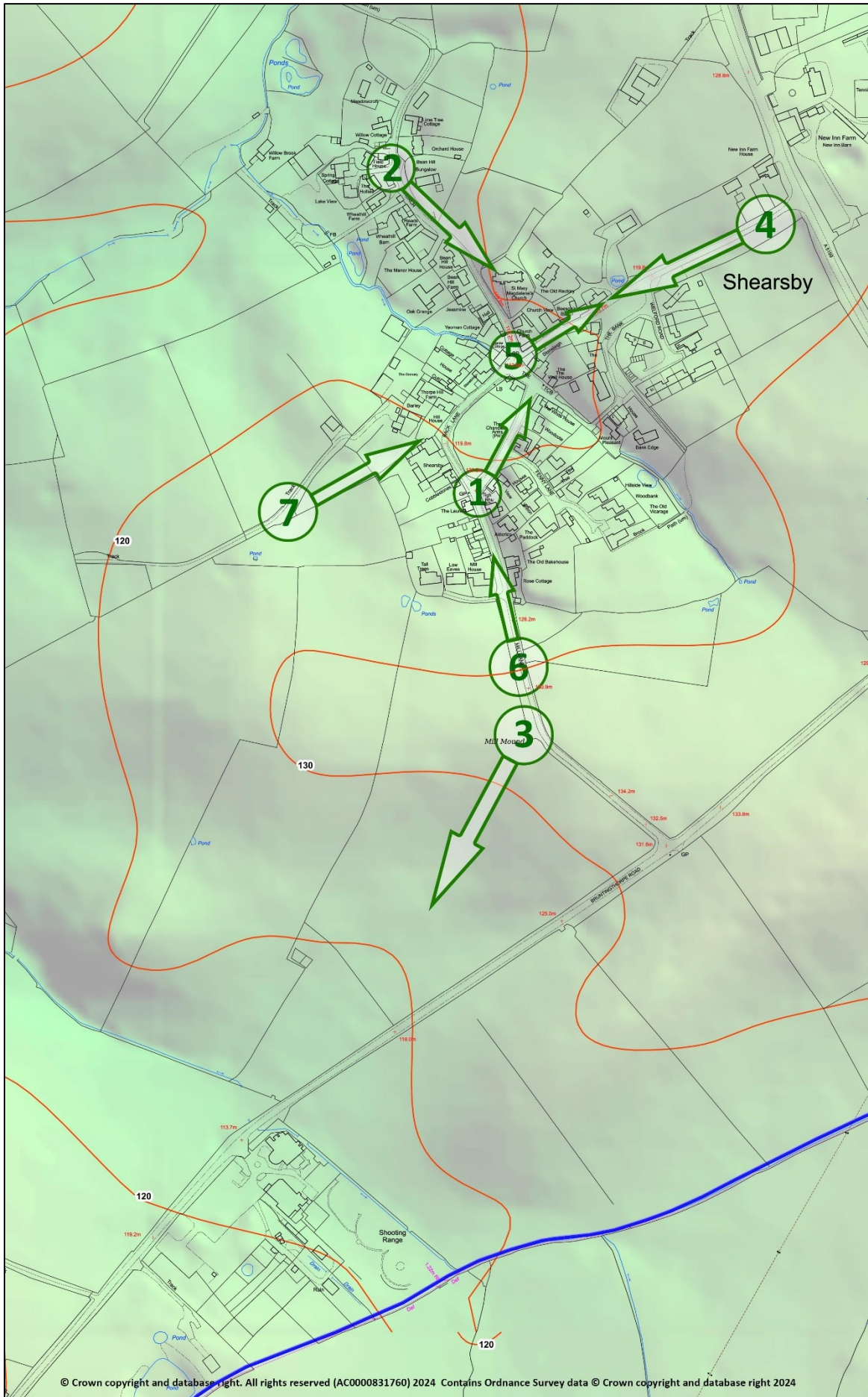
Important Views

Consultation during the Neighbourhood Plan's preparation identified a widely held wish to protect the rural setting of Shearsby, in particular its visual relationship with the surrounding countryside, including the distinctive landscapes of National Character Area *94 Leicestershire Vales*. One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing several highly valued views within and around the village, and toward the surrounding countryside. These consultation findings were supported by the fieldwork for this chapter of the Plan, which although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance also confirmed the sightlines of the suggested views and mapped them (figure 10).

POLICY ENV 9: IMPORTANT VIEWS – The following views (map figure 10, photographs Appendix 5) are important to the setting and character of the village. Development proposals should respect and whenever possible protect them. Development which would have an adverse impact on the identified views will not be supported.

1. From the centre of the village at the junction of Main Street and Mill Lane, north toward The Square, with the village green on the left and the parish church beyond it in the distance
2. From the low point on Church Lane, east up the hill with the parish church on its mound on the left and historic cottages on the right
3. From the bend on Mill Lane at the top of the hill where it leaves the village, southwest across gently descending pasture fields toward Shearsby Baths (heritage asset) and beyond to the distant ridge forming the *Laughton Hills* landscape character area
4. From Welford Road, west down the avenue on Back Lane into the heart of the village; this is the primary 'gateway' view for Shearsby
5. From the junction of Church Lane with Back Lane, up Back Lane toward Welford Road. Until the latter was constructed as a turnpike road, the road from Leicester to Welford came through the village and Back Lane was a narrow side track: its narrowness here, with cottages and farm buildings tight to the road, is in itself a historic feature of the village
6. North into the village down Mill Lane, with wide verges and picturesque cottages
7. From footpath Y73 on the west side of the village, the 'setting' view of Shearsby laying in a fold in the hills, with the parish church on its mound above the houses.

Figure 10: Important views



Flood risk

Because of its elevated position, Shearsby village is not in Flood Risk Zones 3 or 2 and is at no risk of flooding by main rivers. There is an area of Zone 3/2 flood risk to the west, in the valley of the brook that joins the rivers Sense and Soar nearer Leicester, and this should be taken into consideration if open countryside development proposals come forward.

However, as in other South Leicestershire villages, recent changes in agricultural practice and the effects of climate change, mean that surface water flooding along and close to the minor watercourses in the village has become a fairly frequent occurrence in Shearsby. The intention of this policy is to ensure that current best practice is applied in order that the situation here is not exacerbated further by new development.

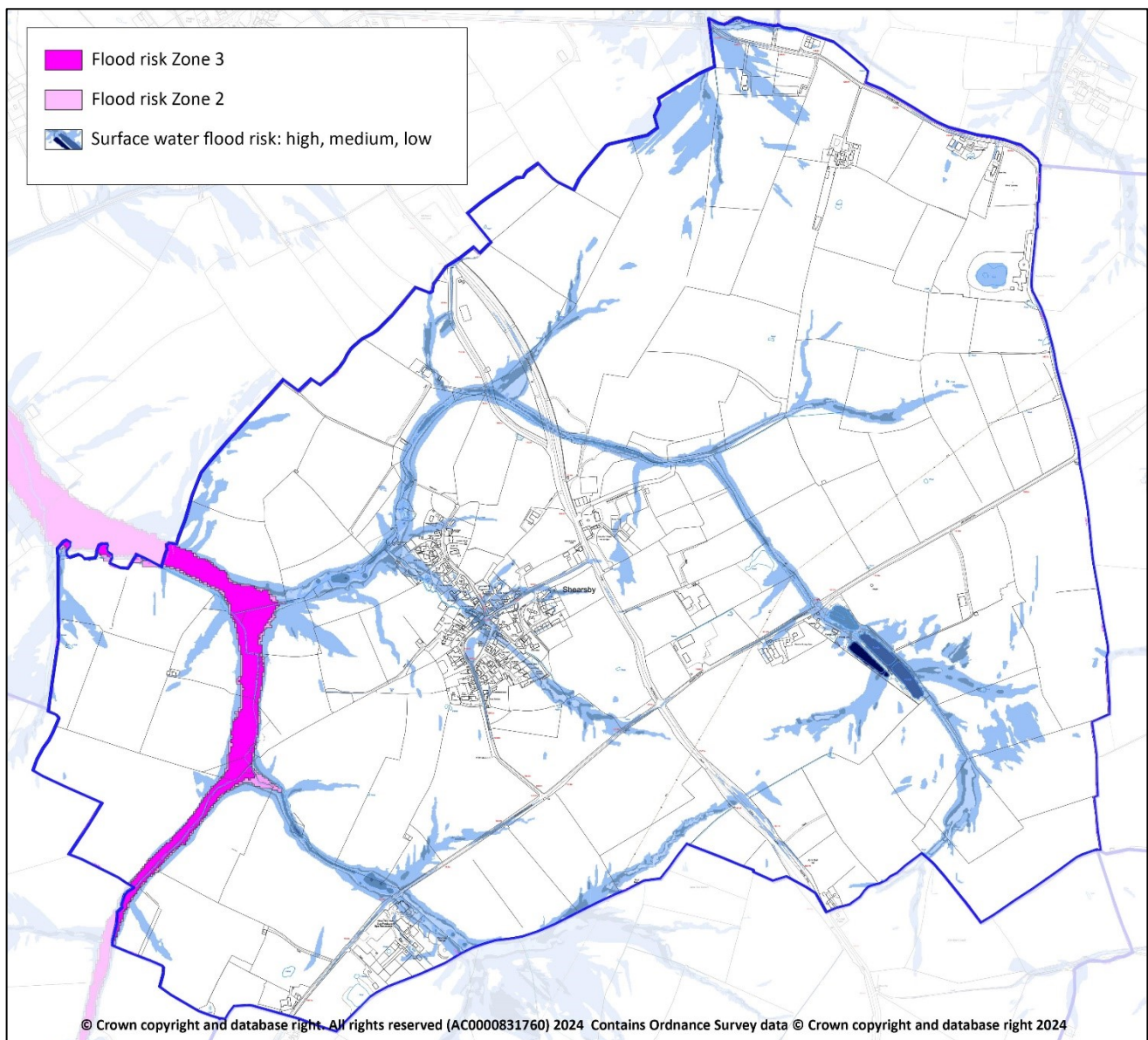
POLICY ENV 10: FLOOD RISK RESILIENCE – Development proposals within the areas of flood risk mapped in Figure 11 will be required to demonstrate that the benefit of development outweighs the harm in relation to its adverse impact on climate change targets, and on the likelihood of it conflicting with locally applicable flood mitigation strategies and infrastructure.

Proposals to construct new (or modify existing) floodwater management infrastructure (ditches, roadside gullies, retention pools, etc.), including within or close to the built-up area, will be supported on condition that they reduce flood risk for residents and do not unnecessarily and adversely affect historical sites, biodiversity or important open spaces.

Development proposals of one or more dwellings and/or for employment/agricultural development should demonstrate that:

- a) if in a location susceptible to flooding from rivers or surface water, no alternative site to meet the local residential development need is available;
- b) its location and design respect the geology, flood risk and natural drainage characteristics of the immediate area and is accompanied by a hydrological study whose findings must be complied with in respect of design, groundworks and construction;
- c) it includes a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage scheme, and site layout and design, will prevent properties from flooding from surface water, including allowing for climate change effects, and that flood risk elsewhere will not be exacerbated by increased levels of surface water runoff and will not threaten other natural habitats and water systems;
- d) its design includes, as appropriate, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with ongoing maintenance provision, other surface water management measures and permeable surfaces;
- e) it does not increase the risk of flooding to third parties;
- f) proposed SuDs infrastructure includes, where practicable, habitat creation comprising e.g. landscaping, access and egress for aquatic and terrestrial animals, and native species planting; and
- g) it takes the future effects of climate change on flood risk into account.

Figure 11: Flood risk Zones 3 and 2 and flooding from Surface Water
Combined Environment Agency mapping



Renewable Energy Generation Infrastructure

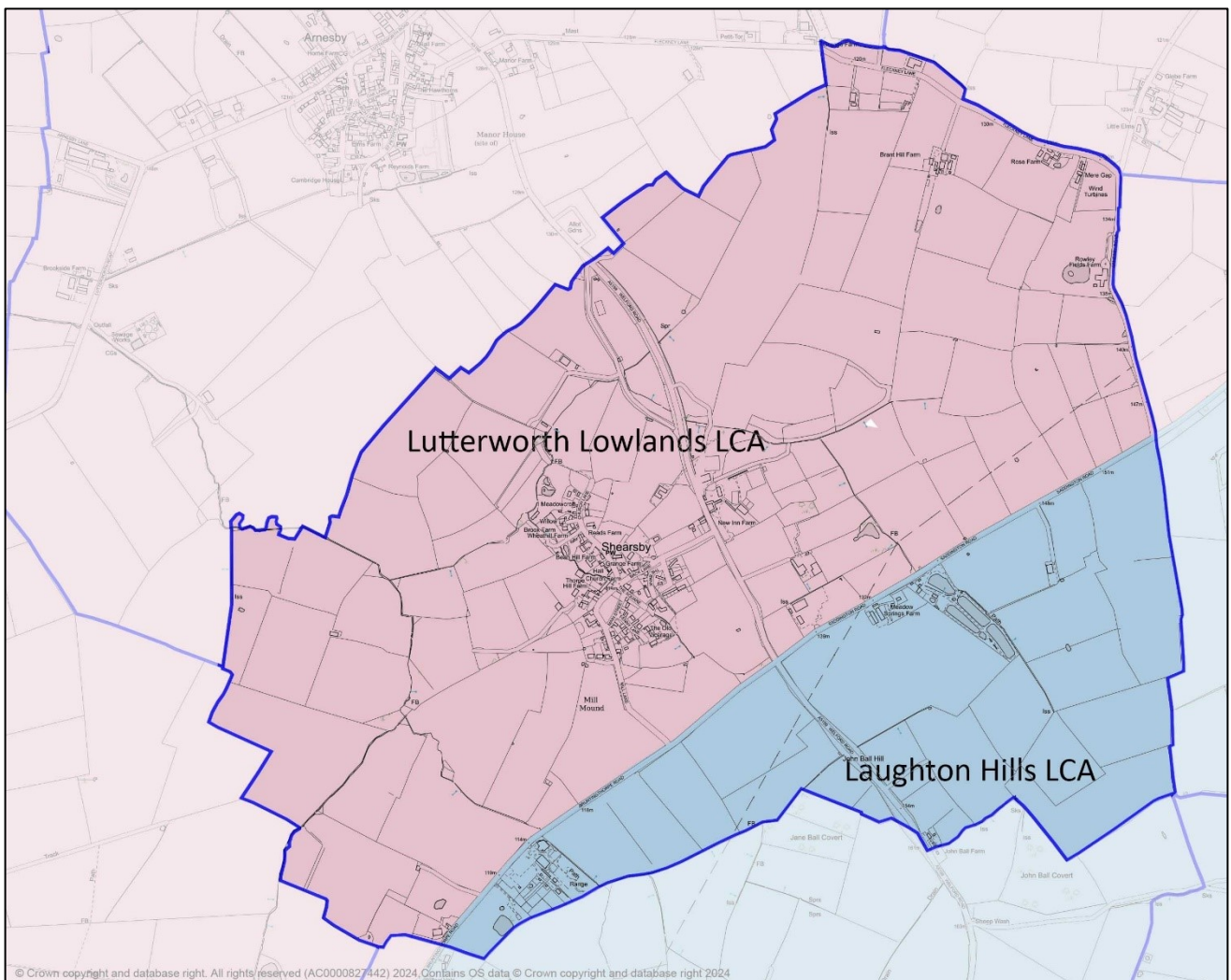
Landscape The landscape of the Neighbourhood Area consists of two main topographic areas, all largely open and with wide views, and a smaller area between them surrounding Shearsby village. They are:

- a) Gently rolling claylands falling gradually northwards toward the wide expanse of the River Soar valley and Leicester. Historically grazing country, but since the mid-20th century many of the fields have been converted to arable. Open countryside, scattered farms and agricultural buildings, hedgerows with notable trees. Part of the regional *Lutterworth Lowlands* landscape character area.
- b) The two small valleys in which Shearsby village itself is located, where the landscape is more intimate, enclosed, and (for historic reasons) still deeply rural despite the proximity of Leicester.

c) Rising steeply southwards from the ancient 'way' now followed by Saddington Road and Bruntingthorpe Road, a ridge of high ground whose high point (John Ball's Hill, on Welford Road) is a local landmark and one of several viewpoints across a broad sweep of Leicestershire. Very little habitation, a few small woodlands resulting from the areas history as foxhunting country. Part of the *Laughton Hills* regional landscape character area.

Planning context NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 161 to 169 make it clear that all communities are responsible for reducing emissions as part of the necessary approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Residents of Shearsby wish to play their part, but at a scale appropriate to the landscape sensitivity of the Neighbourhood Area.

Figure 12 Landscape Character Areas in the Neighbourhood Area
(from *Harborough District Council Landscape Character Assessment 2007*)



Landscape sensitivity Shearsby’s situation in the two Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) mentioned above (figure 12) constrains the sizes and locations of turbines and solar arrays, as follows:

Sensitivities to wind and solar renewable technologies, by LCA, in the Neighbourhood Area (from Landscape Sensitivity to Renewable Energy in Harborough District, 2016

	Laughton Hills	Lutterworth Lowlands
Wind	High sensitivity to wind developments. Individual smaller (below 30m) turbines may be able to be accommodated in areas with human features, e.g. pylons.	Lower sensitivity to wind developments of all sizes. However, the presence of two large scale wind farms [elsewhere] may lead to cumulative impact issues.
Solar	High sensitivity to larger field solar installations. Panels on roofs and well designed, well screened smaller field systems may be possible to accommodate.	Lower sensitivity to all scales of solar developments. However, impacts may be significant in some <i>more rural areas</i> if not adequately screened.

Informal and formal consultation with the community confirmed the anecdotal impression of local opinion among members of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee. As across the nation, attitudes to turbine and solar generation in Shearsby have softened since the 2017 Shearsby Plan was drafted, and the consensus is now that carefully located (Figures 13.1 and 2) infrastructure of appropriate scale would be supported in principle, subject to a range of environmental and social/amenity conditions being met.

Figure 13.1 Unsuitable for turbines

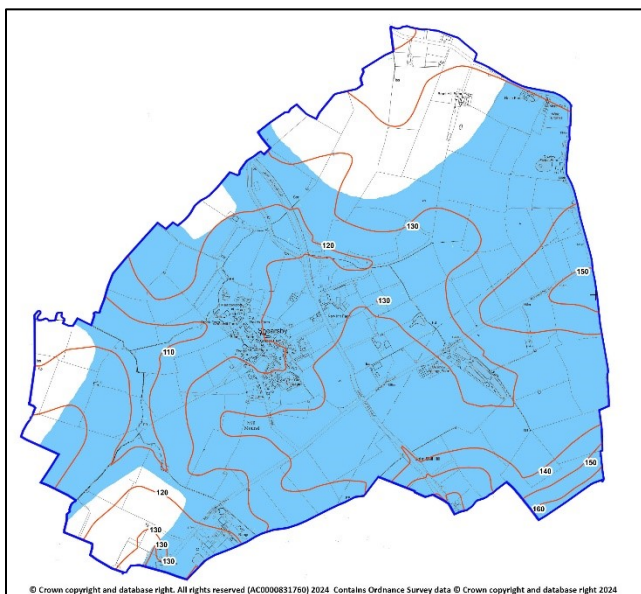
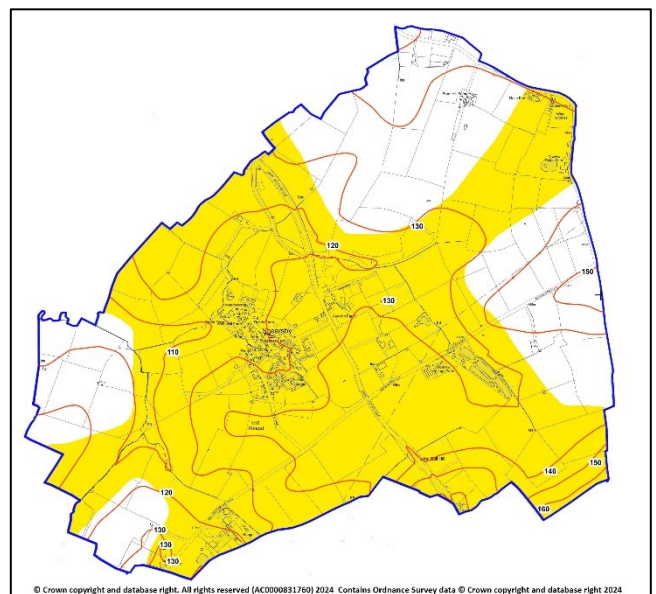


Figure 13.2 Unsuitable for solar (field) arrays



Note: Figures 13.1 and 13.2 are indicative, based on topography, views, proximity to settlement and footpaths, etc., not on the technical suitability of particular locations.

The policy reflects the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which has replaced the need for the Neighbourhood Plan Review to be in general conformity with the Harborough Local Plan (2019) with a stricter requirement that Plans do not conflict with Strategic Planning, and Local Plan Policy CC2 and

has regard for NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 161 to 169.

POLICY ENV 11: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE – Proposals for turbines of tip height no more than 30 metres and small and medium-scale (no more than 25 ha) solar PV infrastructure developments, either local (instigated by residents, local landowners, businesses or the community) or commercial, will be supported in the unshaded area(s) mapped in Figures 13.1 and 13.2, subject to their complying with the following conditions:

- a) The landscape impact of the development is minimised and mitigated against;
- b) The development links to a specific demand through a decentralised energy network, or where this is not possible, the necessary infrastructure is provided to supply power to the National Grid;
- c) The siting of development avoids harm to the significance of a heritage asset and its setting in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF;
- d) The siting of development does not significantly adversely affect the amenity of existing, or proposed, residential dwellings and/or businesses, either in isolation or cumulatively, by reason of noise, odour intrusion, dust, traffic generation, visual impact or glare/reflection;
- e) The development does not result in an adverse impact on the capacity and safety of the highways network and of public rights of way;
- f) The development includes a managed programme of measures to mitigate against any adverse impacts on the built and natural environment resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning of any equipment/infrastructure;
- g) The development does not create a significant adverse cumulative noise or visual impact when considered in conjunction with other developments planned within Harborough District and adjoining local authority areas;
- h) The development has no permanent, lasting adverse effect on on-site biodiversity, provides biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, and supports the enlargement of, and/or connection into, existing biodiversity assets such as wildlife corridors;
- i) the development is not on best and most versatile agricultural land.

Proposals for ground source heat pumps will be supported, provided there is no adverse effect on biodiversity (habitats and species), the best and most versatile agricultural land, or the historic environment

D. Social inclusion

Community Facilities

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, residents 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 an 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 describes how the Plan will contribute towards the objective of maintaining an adequate level and range of facilities.

POLICY CF1: COMMUNITY FACILITIES - Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, an existing community facility will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) There is no longer any need or demand for the community facility. This is to be tested with a marketing campaign of at least 12 months; or
- b) The community facility is, demonstrably, no longer economically viable, or able to be supported by the community, including the potential use of fundraising and volunteering by parishioners or others; or
- c) The proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the 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.

These facilities are the village hall, village green, children's play area, Chandlers Arms and Shearsby Bath.

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 proposed development will not:

- a) generate a need for additional parking that cannot be accommodated within the site or the adjacent highway without undue risk to highway safety;
- b) be of a scale in excess of assessed community needs; and
- c) be inaccessible for pedestrians or cyclists.

Rural Economy

a) Support for existing businesses

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.

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 (41.2% of people living in the Parish

(aged 16-64) compared to 31.5% across England) choosing or needing to work from home which is exacerbated by the absence of public transport.

At 50%, the number of residents that go to work by car (either as driver or passenger), are higher than those for England (54.1%). 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.

The Neighbourhood Plan Review protects such facilities against being lost to other uses by restricting the demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution (Use Class E, B2 and B8) for non-commercial purposes.

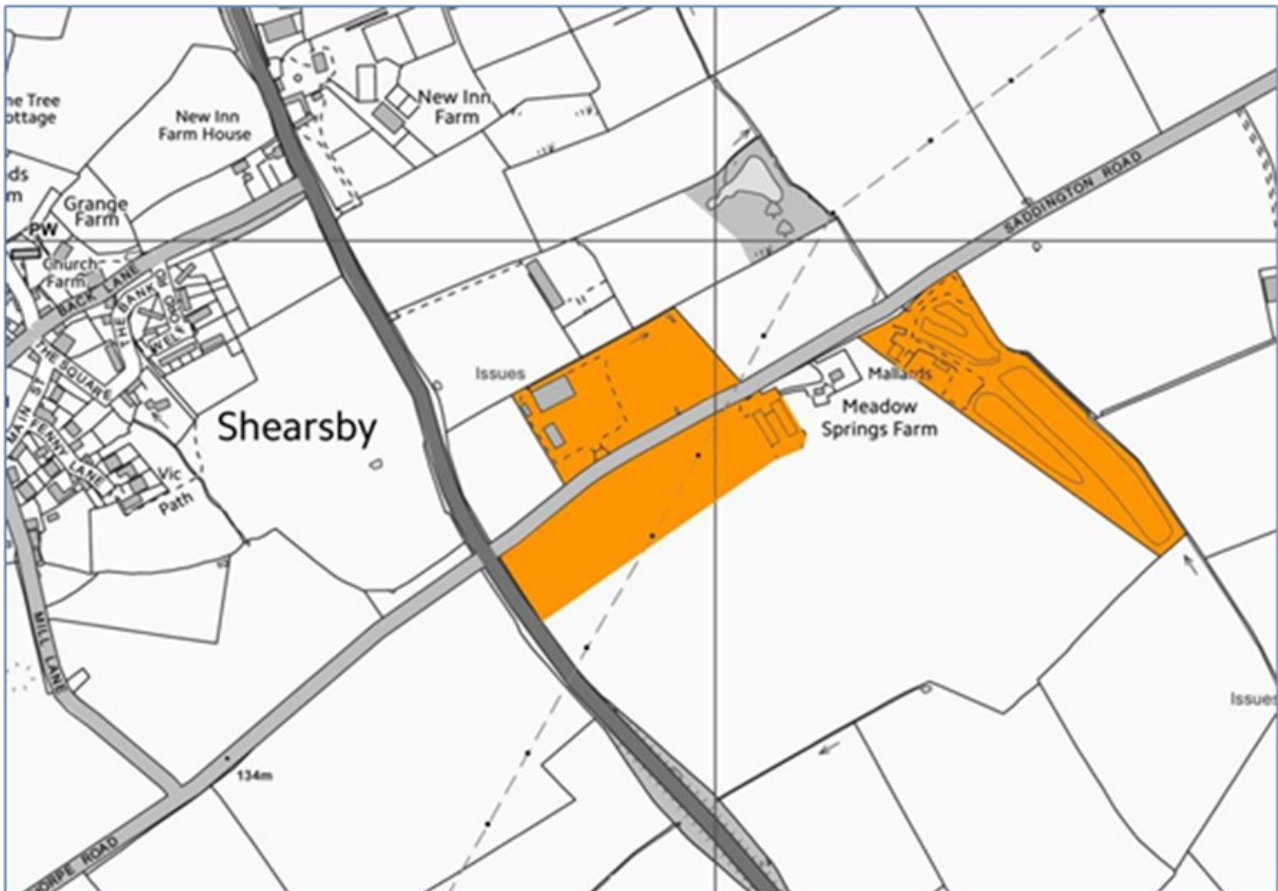
Only if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of the existing building or land being used for employment-generating purposes can this be permitted.

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 – The small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the Parish will be supported. There will be a strong presumption against the loss of Use Class E commercial premises or land on the Saddington Road employment site, to protect current and future employment opportunities. Proposals for any change of use that does not provide employment opportunities will only be permitted provided it can be demonstrated that the commercial premises or land in question has:

- a) not been in active use for at least 12 months; and
- b) no realistic potential for reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses, and;
- c) been subject to a full valuation report and subsequent marketing campaign over a continuous period of at least six months.

Figure 10 - Shearsby Employment Area



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 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 - Proposed development which provides additional employment opportunities will be supported (for example, Use Class E, Commercial, Business and Service) at existing employment sites identified in Figure 10, provided it:

- a) relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities or other commercial/employment development suited to a countryside location;
- b) can be demonstrated that there would be no unmitigable adverse impact or conflict on surrounding residential/community amenity/uses or highway safety, and;
- c) does not relate to Class B2 - General Industrial.

c) Re-use of Agricultural and Commercial Buildings

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 the proposed:

- a) use is compatible with a rural location;
- b) conversion/adaptation works respect local built character;
- c) development will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental feature incapable of effective mitigation;
- d) development is unlikely to generate additional traffic/parking to the detriment of highway safety, and;

- e) use is likely to have no significant adverse impact on local amenity (e.g. noise, light pollution or flood risk).

e) 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 2021 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago – in Shearsby Parish 41.2% of people work from home (over 25% more than 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 30Mbps and above) and improve the mobile telecommunication network will be supported. Where this requires above ground installations, these shall be discreetly located and designed to integrate into the landscape.

e) Working from Home.

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 Harborough Local Plan.

POLICY E5: WORKING FROM HOME – Proposals for change of use of part of a dwelling, extensions, or conversion/erection of outbuildings for office and/or light industrial uses, will be supported where:

- a) No significant and adverse impact would arise from noise, fumes, odour or vibration;
- b) It would not be likely to generate excessive traffic movement or on-street parking; and
- c) Any extension or free-standing building would not detract unacceptably from the quality and character of the main residence, by reason of height, scale, massing, location or external materials.

9. Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2041. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan Review 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 Neighbourhood Plan Review 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 in 2029 or to coincide with the review of the Harborough Local Plan if this cycle is different.