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Report on Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 - 2033

An Examination undertaken for Buckinghamshire Council with the support of Buckland Parish Council on the March 2021 Submission version of the Plan.

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Contents

Main Findings - Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction and Background	5
Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 - 2033	5
The Independent Examiner.....	6
The Scope of the Examination	6
The Basic Conditions	8
2. Approach to the Examination	8
Planning Policy Context	8
Submitted Documents	9
Examiner Questions	10
Site Visit	10
Written Representations with or without Public Hearing	10
Modifications.....	11
3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights.....	11
Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area.....	11
Plan Period	11
Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation	12
Development and Use of Land.....	13
Excluded Development	13
Human Rights.....	14
4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions.....	14
EU Obligations.....	14
Main Assessment	16
Overview	17
Specific Issues of Compliance	18
Settlement Boundary	18
Conservation and Design	20
Housing	21
Employment	21
Parking	22
Community Facilities and Heritage.....	23
Natural Environment	23
Infrastructure	24
Monitoring and Review.....	24

Other Matters	24
Proposed Parish Projects.....	25
Concluding Remarks	25
5. Conclusions	25
Summary.....	25
The Referendum and its Area	26
Overview	26
Appendix: Examiner Modifications (PMs)	27

Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- the Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Buckland Parish Council (the Parish Council);
- the Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Buckland Neighbourhood Area, as identified on the map at page 26 of the Plan;
- the Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – from 2015 to 2033; and,
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 - 2033

- 1.1 The Parish of Buckland in Buckinghamshire, within the former district of Aylesbury Vale, is one of the Chiltern strip parishes, being geographically long and narrow and containing three distinctive landscapes, arable farming land, upland pastures and woodland. The southern part of the parish is within the designated Metropolitan Green Belt and also within the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2 The village of Buckland is within the northern part of the parish, with a Conservation Area at the heart of the village. Prior to the Norman conquest, the manor of Buckland was held by the Diocese of Dorchester-on-Thames, but after 1066 it passed to the Bishop of Lincoln with whom it remained until the 16th century. The manor then passed through the ownership of various families during the 17th and 18th centuries, until it was acquired by George Hassall of Cholesbury in 1815. There then followed a period of economic growth in the parish, linked to the construction of the Wendover Arm canal (which opened in 1799) and the Aylesbury Arm canal (which opened in 1815), both of which pass through the parish and which are branches of the Grand Union Canal. The Victorian properties within the Buckland Conservation Area reflect this period of growth linked to the development of the canals.
- 1.3 The small hamlet of Buckland Wharf is in the south of the parish, which takes its name from the wharf on the Wendover Arm canal. Wharf Row at Buckland Wharf contains former canal workers' cottages and is one of the non-designated heritage assets in the parish. A number of buildings in Buckland reflect the influence of the Rothschild family, including the Grade II listed Village Hall and Old School House and the Pumping Station at Dancers End (completed in 1866) to provide water for the Rothschild estates. All Saints Church in Buckland dates from 1273 and is the only Grade II* listed building in the parish.
- 1.4 The population of the parish was 711 persons at the 2011 Census. There are relatively few retail and commercial facilities within the parish, but these do include restaurants at Buckland Wharf and Tring Hill, with other facilities (including two public houses) having closed gradually during recent years. Public open spaces include land at Lower Buckland, owned by the Parish Council, and Primrose Copse at Buckland Wharf. There are many Public Rights of Way (PROWs) crossing all parts of the parish, which are well used by residents and visitors to the area.
- 1.5 There are no school or health facilities in the parish, although there is a primary school and a GP surgery in Aston Clinton as well as facilities in Aylesbury, Tring and Wendover, where residents also travel for shopping purposes. The two largest employers situated partly within the parish are the

Arla Foods UK dairy at Samian Way, alongside the A41 trunk road, which is the largest dairy in the country, and the Olleco anaerobic digestion plant also at Samian Way. Other much smaller businesses are located across the parish, mainly linked to agriculture and farm diversification, whilst many residents work from home.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.6 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Plan by Buckinghamshire Council (the Council), with the agreement of the Parish Council.
- 1.7 I am a chartered town planner, with over 46 years of experience in planning. I have worked in both the public and private sectors and have experience of examining both local plans and neighbourhood plans. I have also served on a Government working group considering measures to improve the local plan system and undertaken peer reviews on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.
- 1.8 I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.9 At the outset of the Plan's preparation (in February 2020), it was intended by the Parish Council that the Plan would constitute a modification to the adopted Buckland Neighbourhood Plan (which was 'made' on 4 March 2016) by the addition of a new policy concerning a proposed settlement boundary for the village of Buckland. The principal benefit of the modifications procedure for made neighbourhood plans is that, where modifications are agreed to be material, but not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan, this will negate the need for a further referendum on the revised Plan where it proceeds to be examined under Schedule A2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act').
- 1.10 However, the Parish Council did not follow the necessary legal procedure to enable this Plan to be considered under Schedule A2 (reference my procedural determination letter of 3 May 2022). In this regard, the necessary modification statements were not provided at the appropriate consultation and submission stages as required respectively by Regulation 14(a)(v) and Regulation 15(1)(f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations'). This matter is further discussed in paragraph 3.8 below.
- 1.11 This Plan is therefore to be examined under the terms of the 'standard' examination procedure set out in Schedule 4B to the Town and Country

Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'), which I outline in paragraphs 1.12 to 1.16 below. As such, a referendum will be required should the Plan proceed successfully following this examination and my report.

1.12 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:

(a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or

(b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or

(c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

1.13 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the 2004 Act. These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the 2012 Regulations.

1.14 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

- 1.15 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
 - be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law) (Note: the existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law); and
 - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.16 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the Habitats Regulations'). This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Buckinghamshire Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 (VALP) (adopted 15 September 2021) covering the former Aylesbury Vale district.
- 2.2 The VALP sets out the spatial planning vision and objectives and strategy for the spatial development and growth for Aylesbury Vale up to 2033. The overall strategy adopted by the Council to meet housing need is to direct sustainable levels of development to existing settlements, through the implementation of a capacity-based approach. More than half of the new homes planned for Aylesbury Vale are planned to go in Aylesbury. Buckland is categorised as a 'Smaller Village' in the VALP's settlement hierarchy, which reflects the position that such villages are less sustainable with limited access to services and facilities. It is expected that some small-scale development

could be accommodated at the smaller villages without causing unreasonable harm. This level of development is also likely to help maintain existing communities. Sites at smaller villages will come forward either through neighbourhood plans or by individual 'windfall' planning applications that will be considered against the relevant development management policies, but no specific site allocations are made in the VALP for the smaller villages including Buckland.

- 2.3 The VALP includes development management policies, and the principal strategic policies affecting Buckland parish, including Policies S3, S4 and NE3, reflect a general strategy of restraint upon development within the rural parts of the district, including those parts within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 2.4 There is an emerging local plan in the form of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan, however this is at an early stage of preparation as set out in the Local Development Scheme (see paragraph 2.8 below).
- 2.5 The Basic Conditions Statement provides an assessment of how the policies proposed in the Plan have regard to national policy and are in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies in the VALP. Having been adopted in 2021, the VALP provides an up-to-date strategic planning context for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.6 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 20 July 2021. All references in this report are to the 2021 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.7 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
 - the draft Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2033 Submission Version (March 2021) and its Appendices;
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion Report (August 2021);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (March 2021);
 - the Consultation Statement (March 2021); and
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation.

These documents can be viewed at: [Buckland Neighbourhood Plan submission consultation - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)

Examiner Questions

- 2.8 Following my appointment as the independent examiner and my initial review of the draft Plan, its supporting documents and representations made at the Regulation 16 stage, I wrote to the Parish Council and the Council on 3 May 2022 seeking further clarification and information on matters contained in the submission Plan, as follows:
- firstly, I sought confirmation from the Council that the current timetable for the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan to cover the period to 2040, is as referenced in the latest Local Development Scheme (LDS); and
 - secondly, I noted that the principal proposed change to the existing made Plan is the addition of a new policy (Policy BP1) defining a Settlement Boundary (although also described as a Housing Settlement Boundary) for Buckland Parish. With regard to this new policy, I sought further information from the Parish Council to clarify the evidential support for the definition of the boundary, apart from the text at page 8 of the draft Plan that precedes the proposed policy. In particular, I sought further clarity around the justification for the apparent exclusion of non-residential properties/sites from being within the proposed boundary (as described at page 3 of the Basic Conditions Statement).
- 2.9 In response to my letter of 3 May 2022, the Council and the Parish Council provided me with their responses to the questions listed above on 4 May and 16 May 2022 respectively. I have taken full account of the information contained in these responses as part of my assessment of the draft Plan, alongside the documents listed at paragraph 2.7 above. My letter and the respective responses can be viewed here: [Neighbourhood plans | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Site Visit

- 2.10 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 14 May 2022 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan, evidential documents and representations.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.11 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections and comments regarding the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. I am satisfied that the material supplied is sufficiently comprehensive for me to be able to deal with the matters raised under the written representations procedure, and that there was not a requirement to convene a public hearing

as part of this examination. In all cases, the information provided has enabled me to reach a conclusion on the matters concerned.

Modifications

- 2.12 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications in full in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by Buckland Parish Council. An application to the former Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) for the Parish of Buckland to be designated a neighbourhood planning area was made on 8 August 2013 and was approved by AVDC on 31 January 2014, following public consultation. On 1 April 2020, AVDC was replaced by Buckinghamshire Council, which carries over the statutory designation. Buckland Parish Council was one of the first Parish Councils within Buckinghamshire to begin the process of creating a neighbourhood development plan, and the current Plan, which this Plan is intended to supersede, was made on 4 March 2016, following a referendum held on 11 February 2016.
- 3.2 The designated Neighbourhood Plan Area comprises the whole of the Parish of Buckland. The designated area is shown on the map at page 26 in the submission Plan. The Buckland Neighbourhood Plan is the only neighbourhood plan in the designated area.
- 3.3 Buckland Parish Council is the Qualifying Body for the preparation of the Plan. The production of the Plan has been led by the Parish Council, which comprises seven Councillors, who have undertaken the Plan's preparation and associated community engagement and consultation.

Plan Period

- 3.4 The draft Plan specifies (on the front cover) the period to which it is to take effect, which 2015 to 2033. The Plan period encompasses the plan period for the adopted VALP, prepared by the former Aylesbury Vale District Council and adopted by the successor authority, Buckinghamshire Council, in September 2021.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.5 The Consultation Statement and its Appendices sets out a full record of the Plan's preparation and its associated engagement and consultation activity between Autumn 2019 and Spring 2021. The decision to undertake the modification of the made Neighbourhood Plan was taken in Autumn 2019 by the Parish Council, and the initial consultation and engagement work undertaken in early-2020 clearly then envisaged that the principal modification would be the addition of a new policy (BP1) and settlement boundary for the village of Buckland.
- 3.6 The consultation and engagement work occurred at three key stages, as follows:
- Stage 1: Initial work with the distribution of a survey form, principally concerning housing need, to all residents in the parish, but also inviting comments on any other issues. A copy of the survey form is at Appendix A to the Consultation Statement. A public meeting in February 2020 and exhibitions planned for March 2020 and September 2020 were unable to take place due to Covid pandemic restrictions, but all residents were notified in September 2020 of continuing progress on the preparation of the draft Plan and work leading up to the forthcoming pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation.
 - Stage 2: Pre-submission consultation took place on the draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14) (November 2020 - January 2021).
 - Stage 3: Submission to the Council, Regulation 16 consultation and commencement of the examination (Summer 2021- Spring 2022).
- 3.7 During Stage 1, the Parish Council focused on obtaining residents' views and comments on the matters to be considered in modifications to the made Plan, but principally on the proposal for a settlement boundary and accompanying policy for Buckland village. The restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic prevented the ability to hold public meetings and exhibitions during much of 2020, but notwithstanding those restrictions the Parish Council was able to engage with the local community on the Plan's preparation using social media and the parish website.
- 3.8 During Stage 2, the main consultation and engagement activity was focused on the pre-submission Regulation 14 consultation on the draft Plan held between 27 November 2020 and 10 January 2021. Notifications regarding this consultation were sent to statutory consultees (listed at Appendix F to the Consultation Statement), residents and landowners in the parish and relevant local community groups and organisations. The responses received are summarised at Appendix H to the Consultation Statement. It is relevant to note that the Council's response dated 8 January 2021 made it clear that at that stage, and in the absence of a modification statement by the Parish Council to accompany the Regulation 14 consultation, the Council were treating the consultation as a consultation on the whole of the draft Plan.

Although the Parish Council stated in a letter to residents and landowners dated 25 November 2020 that “*Buckland Parish Council considers the changes that have been made to be material modifications which clarify the Plan but do not change the nature of the Plan*”, this was not supported by the necessary modification statement, including the reasons for arriving at this view, either at the Regulation 14 consultation stage or upon subsequent submission of the draft Plan to the Council. Therefore, as discussed at paragraphs 1.9 - 1.11 above, in the absence of the necessary statutory statements from the Parish Council the draft Plan is being examined under the ‘standard’ examination procedure set out in Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (and therefore, a referendum will be required if the Plan is to proceed further following the examination).

- 3.9 Work during Stage 3 focused on the finalisation of the draft Plan and supporting documents for formal submission to the Council for examination.
- 3.10 The Consultation Statement provides a full record of the consultation and engagement work that was undertaken during the preparation of the Plan, including the actions that were taken to amend or modify the draft Plan following consultation responses at the key stages in the Plan’s preparation, particularly at Appendix H which records the amendments that were made to the draft Plan following the Regulation 14 consultation.
- 3.11 Regulation 16 consultation was held for a period of six weeks from 25 November 2021 to 13 January 2022. I have taken account of the three responses then received, as well as the published Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the Plan, notwithstanding the difficulties imposed by the Covid pandemic restrictions particularly during 2020, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.12 I am satisfied that the draft Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with section 38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.13 From my review of the documents before me, the draft Plan does not include policies or proposals that relate to any of the categories of excluded development. The meaning of ‘excluded development’ is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

Human Rights

- 3.14 Neither the Council nor any other party has raised any issues concerning a breach of, or incompatibility with Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my assessment of the Plan, its accompanying supporting documents and the consultation responses made to the Plan at the Regulations 14 and 16 stages, I am satisfied that the Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. I consider that none of the objectives and policies in the Plan will have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Many will have a positive impact.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 The Council issued a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion report in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations') in August 2021, and this was prepared on the basis of the policies contained in the pre-submission draft Plan and followed the Regulation 14 consultation in November 2020 - January 2021. This Screening Opinion is submitted alongside the draft Plan and concludes (at Section 5) that the policies in the pre-submission draft Plan are unlikely to have significant environmental effects on the environment, and therefore that a full SEA is not deemed to be required. The Screening Opinion report was the subject of consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England during July 2021 (and the responses are set out at Appendix 1 to the Screening Opinion report).
- 4.2 I have considered the SEA screening methodology and assessment set out in the Screening Opinion report (at Section 4) by which the Plan was duly screened to determine whether the Plan is likely to have potential environmental effects. Overall, I am satisfied that a proportionate approach has been taken and that the Plan was screened to take full account of any potential effects upon interests of environmental, landscape, historic and heritage importance.
- 4.3 The Plan was also screened (at the SEA screening stage) by the Council in order to establish whether the Plan required Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) under the Habitats Regulations. The SEA Screening Opinion report (at page 10) notes that *"No sites were allocated in Buckland by the Local Plan and any development supported by the Buckland Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to be limited to infilling proposals, it is unlikely a further HRA Screening Assessment is needed. There are no areas of Natura*

2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas) in the parish". On that basis, a HRA Screening Assessment for the Plan was not undertaken at that stage. However, on 14 March 2022 (and subsequent to that decision) Natural England notified the Council (and other authorities in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire) of emerging evidence that identified significant recreational pressure on the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and more specifically the Ashridge Commons and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) situated at the Ashridge Estate. For further details see: [Development in the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

- 4.4 Following the notification by Natural England, the Council considered that a HRA Screening Assessment for the Plan should be undertaken, and a Draft Screening Assessment report was prepared in June 2022. This report concluded at paragraphs 94 and 95 that the revised Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to lead to potential adverse effects on a European site that needs investigating by the preparation of an Appropriate Assessment and that, therefore, no HRA stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment) is deemed required. The Draft Screening Assessment report was then subject to formal consultation with Natural England. Natural England responded to the consultation stating that, "*Based on the plan submitted, Natural England agree with the assessment that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require a HRA*". The Council then subsequently issued a Final Screening Outcome report, dated 22 July 2022.
- 4.5 The Buckland Neighbourhood Area is within the 12.6 kilometres Zone of Influence (Zol) of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, and at present planning applications for proposed new residential developments that result in a net increase in dwellings within the Zol are not being determined by the Council, pending the formulation of a strategic solution by Natural England and completion of any necessary Appropriate Assessments (AA) under the Habitats Regulations. Natural England has adopted an interim position whereby AA's will be required for all proposals for new residential developments in the Zol to determine how each individual site will avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the SAC. This interim position is likely to apply until such time as a formal strategic solution is adopted.
- 4.6 I have given careful consideration to the implications arising from the notification made by Natural England in March 2022 and to the HRA Screening Assessment subsequently undertaken for the Plan in June/July 2022. Whilst it is the case that the Plan and its policies make no specific proposals for new residential development on any site within the Plan area, a number of the Plan's policies do provide support for appropriate residential developments within the Plan area, subject to compliance with those policies' specific criteria and requirements. Therefore, there is a likelihood of planning applications being made for new residential developments within the Plan area whilst the present interim position adopted by Natural England remains in force, and which are also likely to be potentially affected by a future longer-

term strategic solution, the details of which remain to be agreed. In my assessment, whilst I am satisfied that on the basis of the information provided to the examination that the submitted Plan is compatible with EU obligations under retained EU law, a modification is now necessary to reflect the notification made subsequently by Natural England (dated 14 March 2022) in order to meet the Basic Conditions. Such a modification will ensure that all users of the Plan, and in particular any party considering proposals for new residential development on sites within the Plan area, is made fully aware of the interim position presently adopted by Natural England, and potentially a future strategic solution. Accordingly, I recommend modification **PM1** to address this important issue.

Main Assessment

- 4.7 The NPPF states (at paragraph 29) that “*Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan*” and also that “*Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies*”. The NPPF (at paragraph 11) also sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to state (at paragraph 13) that neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.
- 4.8 Having considered above whether the Plan complies with various legal and procedural requirements, it is now necessary to deal with the question of whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions (see paragraph 1.15 of this report), particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies.
- 4.9 Whilst I am examining this effectively as a new Plan, I do cross-refer in my report to the extant policies of the current made Plan in order to assist the reader in understanding where there have been substantive updates and changes incorporated into the submitted draft Plan. The Basic Conditions Statement (March 2021) confirms that 11 Policies within the current made Plan are subject to amendments and modifications in this Plan, together with the proposed new policy (Policy BP1). I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan’s 16 policies, which address the following themes: Settlement Boundary; Conservation and Design; Housing; Employment; Car Parking; Community Facilities and Heritage; Natural Environment; and Infrastructure. As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies in the Plan are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently

and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence (PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306). I recommend some modifications as a result.

Overview

- 4.10 The Plan is addressing the period from 2015 to 2033 and seeks to provide a clear planning framework to allow development within Buckland to take place in an appropriate way for the parish, whilst guiding and managing future growth, protecting the character and history of the parish, promoting a flourishing local economy and containing policies that seek to have a positive effect on the environment. The Plan contains specific policies in respect of each of the themes listed above.
- 4.11 Pages 4-6 of the Plan provide an introduction to the Plan following the designation of the parish as a Neighbourhood Area in January 2014 and includes a short synopsis of the neighbourhood planning process that has been undertaken in Buckland. This section of the Plan will require some minor updating following the adoption of the VALP in September 2021 (see paragraph 4.54 below).
- 4.12 Page 7 of the Plan sets out the aims and objectives to be achieved over the Plan period and the Plan's vision for Buckland in 2033. The Plan's aims and objectives are as follows:
- A. *Facilitate provision of housing for the elderly down-sizers and starter homes for purchase.*
 - B. *To ensure all development is of good design, maintains local distinctiveness and responds to local housing needs.*
 - C. *To ensure all development respects the environments, local flora and fauna and achieves net gain in biodiversity.*
 - D. *Protect valued open spaces and habitats from development.*
 - E. *Make appropriate provision for a changing agricultural economy.*

The Plan's vision for Buckland in 2033 is:

“To maintain a thriving community where the parish grows in keeping the character of its distinct zones. Local businesses and facilities will have the freedom to grow and develop in accordance with local needs. They will make a positive impact on the parish, its residents, environment and resources. The parish will retain its sense of community by carefully managing change and protecting its environment, setting, heritage and surrounding countryside from unsustainable development.”

- 4.13 The Basic Conditions Statement (at Sections 1 and 2) describes how the Plan and its policies has regard to national policies contained in the NPPF and (at Section 4) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Section 3 of the Basic Conditions Statement sets out the detailed

modifications and revisions that have been made to the existing Policies contained in the current made Plan, together with proposed new Policy BP1.

- 4.14 Overall, I consider that, subject to the further modifications that I recommend to specific policies below, that individually and collectively the Plan's policies will contribute to the achievement of sustainable patterns of development. There are also a number of detailed matters which require amendment to ensure that the policies have the necessary regard to national policy and are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Council. Accordingly, I recommend modifications in this report in order to address these matters.

Specific Issues of Compliance

- 4.15 I turn now to consider each of the proposed policies as set out in the respective sections of the draft Plan and take into account, where appropriate, the representations that have been made concerning these policies.
- 4.16 For clarification, policies that were numbered BP1 - BP15 in the current made Plan are now numbered as BP2 - BP15 (with the previous policy numbered as BP8 now being consolidated within revised Policy BP9), and it is these revised numbers that are used throughout this report. A number of these policies have not been amended and are carried forward unchanged, but others have been amended in the draft Plan. Policies BP1 and BP16 are new policies that are not within the current made Plan. It should also be noted that the Contents page erroneously refers - from BP9 to BP17- to either policies in the current made Plan with their former titles or to incorrectly numbered policies.

Settlement Boundary

- 4.17 This section of the Plan contains the first of the additional policies that are not presently contained in the made Plan. Policy BP1 (Housing Settlement Boundary) states that the Plan designates the Housing Settlement Boundary for Buckland Parish as shown on the map at Appendix H to the Plan. Proposals for infill development within the Settlement Boundary will be supported, but proposals for residential development, other than for rural housing exception schemes, on land outside that boundary will not be supported
- 4.18 The introduction of this policy to the Plan was the initial rationale for the preparation of the Plan, and I have given very careful consideration to the justification for the policy, its detailed definition and in particular to the fact that it has been defined to exclude non-residential buildings and uses. This leads to the policy being entitled 'Housing Settlement Boundary', although it is also described as a 'Settlement Boundary' at other places in the Plan, for example on page 5.

- 4.19 Upon my initial assessment of the Plan and as one of the preliminary questions that I raised with the Council and Parish Council on 3 May 2022 (see paragraph 2.8 above), I sought further clarification in regard to the relevant evidence to support the definition of the proposed boundary, apart from the text at page 8 of the draft Plan. I also sought clarity in relation to the justification for the apparent exclusion of non-residential properties/sites from being within the proposed boundary. The Parish Council responded to this question on 16 May 2022, and I have given careful consideration to that response in my assessment of both the policy and the proposed Housing Settlement Boundary. I have also assessed the proposed boundary during the course of my site visit.
- 4.20 The definition of settlement boundaries in development plans is a common policy mechanism in most plans, particularly for settlements in rural areas. However, it is very unusual for a settlement boundary to be restricted solely to residential development within a settlement and then be termed a 'Housing Settlement Boundary'.
- 4.21 I consider that it is entirely appropriate for a settlement boundary to be defined for Buckland village but I do acknowledge that it is difficult to define a proposed boundary that meets the community's land use aspirations in full, because of the relatively dispersed nature of development along the roads leading into the centre of the village, with the exception of development along the southern side of New Road leading from the village to Aston Clinton. I am also concerned that the current exclusion of non-residential development from the scope of the policy potentially places proposals for some small-scale employment-related or community-related developments, that could be satisfactorily located within the settlement boundary, at a very significant disadvantage in complying not only with Policy BP1 but further with other policies in the Plan. In addition, I note that the proposed boundary does include some non-residential buildings, most notably All Saints Church and the Village Hall. In simple terms, the draft policy and its accompanying Housing Settlement Boundary (at Appendix H) is too restrictive and is not contributing towards achieving sustainable development.
- 4.22 I therefore recommend some amendments to the text of Policy BP1 such that it is clearly defining a settlement boundary, as the title of this section of the Plan already states, and that it will constitute a policy for the consideration and assessment of all development proposals within the settlement boundary. I do not recommend any revisions to the proposed boundary itself, recognising that a consistent approach has been adopted to its definition. However, I do consider that in their future monitoring of the Plan, the Parish Council should give particular attention to the effectiveness of this policy and whether it is meeting the aims and objectives of the Plan. Recommended modification **PM2** addresses the necessary amendments.
- 4.23 With recommended modification PM2, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Settlement Boundary and its accompanying policy (BP1) is in

general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Conservation and Design

- 4.24 The Conservation and Design section of the Plan contains four policies (Policies BP2-BP5), which are all within the current made Plan.
- 4.25 Policy BP2 (Development within and adjacent to the Conservation Area) is unchanged from the current made Plan. In my assessment of this policy, I recommend one amendment to delete the word '*permitted*' as the Parish Council is not the local planning authority and therefore not able to grant planning permissions. This is addressed by recommended modification **PM3**. This amendment is also necessary to certain other unchanged policies, as set out in the Appendix to this report which contains a schedule of recommended modifications to the Plan.
- 4.26 Policy BP3 (AONB and Green Belt) is within the current made Plan, but has been amended to include reference to '*except in very exceptional circumstances*'. Although that amendment has been made following a response made by the Council at the Regulation 14 consultation stage, the correct reference should be to very special circumstances in order to be consistent with national policy on development within approved Green Belts, as set out at paragraphs 147-151 of the NPPF. In the case of this Plan, the designated Metropolitan Green Belt coincides exactly with the designated AONB within the Plan area. I therefore recommend an amendment to the text of the policy to make this adjustment, and this is addressed by recommended modification **PM4**.
- 4.27 Policy BP4 (Local Distinctiveness) is also unchanged from the current made Plan. An amendment in the interests of clarity is provided by recommended modification **PM5**.
- 4.28 Policy BP5 (No Further Coalescence) is within the current made Plan but the text of the policy has been extended to make reference to the importance of views both into and out of the Parish, particularly in relation to the Conservation Area and land within the designated AONB. The supporting justification for the policy has also been updated to refer to recent developments at Aston Clinton, which is in close proximity to the village of Buckland at its western edge. However, some amendments are necessary to the text of the policy and to Appendix D/1 (on page 30) to clarify that the important views are within the Parish, as the Plan is not able to seek to protect any views that are of areas beyond the designated Plan area itself. These amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM6**.
- 4.29 With recommended modifications PM3-PM6, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Conservation and Design and its accompanying policies

(BP2-BP5) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Housing

- 4.30 The Housing section of the Plan contains three policies (Policies BP6-BP8), which are all within the current made Plan.
- 4.31 Policy BP6 (New Development) has been amended by the addition of a final sentence of text stating that new development, both major and minor, will be required to show a net gain in biodiversity. The policy states that throughout the Parish in the built-up areas new ribbon development will be supported. I consider that this statement can be made clearer to avoid the use of the term 'ribbon development' which could lead to less acceptable forms of development being proposed in some parts of the Plan area. I therefore recommend modification **PM7** to address this point.
- 4.32 Policy BP7 (Meeting Local Housing Needs) is unchanged from the current made Plan, but the supporting justification for the policy has been updated to refer to the housing survey undertaken in December 2019, the results of which are summarised at Appendix L in the Plan. However, the third sentence of policy text states that "*permitted development rights will be removed from these properties to ensure they continue to meet this need*". This policy statement requires amendment as neither the Plan nor the Parish Council are able to remove any permitted development rights, which in this case would be a matter for the Council, usually as part of a planning permission being granted. I therefore recommend modification **PM8** in order to address this defect.
- 4.33 Policy BP8 (Affordable Homes) has been amended by the addition of a reference to a housing needs survey being undertaken by or in consultation with a Rural Housing Enabler. I consider that the policy text is clear and well drafted.
- 4.34 With recommended modifications PM7 and PM8, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Housing and its accompanying policies (BP6-BP8) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Employment

- 4.35 The Employment section of the Plan contains two policies (Policies BP9 and BP10). Policy BP9 is a revised and consolidated policy replacing two policies that were addressing small businesses and the redevelopment of existing businesses in the current made Plan. Policy BP10 is in the current made Plan but has been extended.

- 4.36 As noted above, Policy BP9 (Local Businesses) consolidates two policies, and states that support will be given to local existing and new rural businesses to enable them to grow and expand within the Plan area, including the development and diversification of agricultural and land-use businesses, subject to satisfying five planning, design and environmental criteria. However, the policy text requires some amendments to improve its clarity for the benefit of users of the Plan, and these amendments are addressed by recommended modification **PM9**. With these modifications I consider that the policy is justified and will provide appropriate guidance for the consideration of planning proposals submitted by local businesses.
- 4.37 Policy BP10 (Re-use of Redundant Farm Buildings) is in the current made Plan but has been extended to include a requirement for a net gain in biodiversity and that appropriate mitigations are included in any development proposals to safeguard protected and notable species. I consider that the policy is appropriately drafted, subject to one amendment which is addressed by recommended modification **PM10**.
- 4.38 With recommended modifications PM9 and PM10, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Employment and its accompanying policies (BP9 and BP10) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Parking

- 4.39 The Parking section of the Plan contains two policies (Policies BP11 and BP12), which are both within the current made Plan, but which have both been extended with additional policy text.
- 4.40 Policy BP11 (Provision of on-site parking spaces) sets out on-site car parking requirements for residential developments within the Plan area, and the policy has been extended from that contained in the current made Plan by the addition of a statement that the development of apartments must also adhere to the requirements for similarly sized houses. As drafted, I note the policy is partly at variance with Policy T6 and Appendix B of the adopted VALP, particularly in respect of one-bedroom and three-bedroom dwellings. However, I note that the Council has raised no concerns regarding this policy, and I further note from my site visit that it is important to prevent, as far as possible, car parking on the verges and carriageways of the many narrow roads within the Plan area. Nevertheless, I consider that the policy should also refer to the Council's adopted car parking standards to ensure that users of the Plan are able to assess those adopted standards as part of their development proposals. This is addressed by recommended modification **PM11**.
- 4.41 Policy BP12 (Business traffic) states that for all new business developments, including conversions and extensions, provision must be made for all staff and

visitor parking to be accommodated on-site, to ensure the safety of other more vulnerable road users. As with Policy BP11, I recognise the need to avoid car parking on roads and verges, particularly in the more rural parks of the Plan area. However, I consider that this policy should also refer to the Council's adopted car parking standards for further guidance and clarity on this matter. This is addressed by recommended modification **PM12**.

- 4.42 With recommended modifications PM11 and PM12, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Parking and its accompanying policies (BP11 and BP12) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Community Facilities and Heritage

- 4.43 The Community Facilities and Heritage section of the Plan contains two policies (Policies BP13 and BP14), which are both within the current made Plan.
- 4.44 Policy BP13 (Community Facilities) is unchanged and I consider that it is a clear and well-drafted policy, with appropriate supporting justification.
- 4.45 Policy BP14 (Heritage) has been extended by making reference to the designated and non-designated heritage assets in the Plan area, which are listed at Appendices E and F in the Plan. I note that no representations were made concerning either the policy or the schedule of non-designated heritage assets. However, national policy for non-designated heritage assets is not to presume to resist proposals that directly or indirectly affect them, but to make a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. Therefore, I recommend modifying Policy BP14 so that it reflects the balanced judgement in the NPPF (paragraph 203), so it would have regard to national policy and meet the Basic Conditions. This is addressed by recommended modification **PM13**.
- 4.46 With recommended modification PM13, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Community Facilities and Heritage and its accompanying policies (BP13 and BP14) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Natural Environment

- 4.47 The Natural Environment section of the Plan contains one policy (Policy BP15), which is within the current made Plan, but which has been extended to now make reference to the fauna and flora in the Plan area.
- 4.48 Policy BP15 (Biodiversity) has a comprehensive and informative supporting justification, and the policy seeks to ensure that development within the Plan

area protects and enhances existing biodiversity and wildlife and provide a net gain in biodiversity. An amendment is necessary to clarify that the policy applies to proposals for new development in the Plan area, and this is addressed by recommended modification **PM14**.

- 4.49 With recommended modification PM14, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Natural Environment and its accompanying Policy (BP15) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Infrastructure

- 4.50 The Infrastructure section of the Plan contains the second additional Policy (Policy BP16) that is being proposed in the draft Plan. Although the topic of infrastructure is covered in the current made Plan, it did not include a specific policy.
- 4.51 Policy BP16 (Infrastructure) only addresses the provision of higher, more reliable broadband speeds in the Plan area, but, in my assessment, the policy needs to also address the provision and enhancement of other community infrastructure in the Plan area, with the purpose of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. I therefore recommend that the policy be redrafted to cover the topic of infrastructure more broadly, but including the provision of improved broadband infrastructure, within the parish. Accordingly, I recommend modification **PM15** to address this matter.
- 4.52 With recommended modification PM15, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Infrastructure and its accompanying Policy (BP16) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the VALP, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Monitoring and Review

- 4.53 The draft Plan includes a short section entitled 'Monitoring Progress' which states that the Plan will be monitored annually by the Parish Council, reviewed by the community every five years, and updated as required. It also states that the Plan will be reviewed when a new Local Plan is adopted by Buckinghamshire Council. I am satisfied that this provides a clear commitment by the Parish Council to monitor and review the Plan.

Other Matters

- 4.54 The reference on page 5 of the Plan to the "imminent adoption of VALP" by the Council should be factually amended to reflect that the Plan was adopted in September 2021. This can be undertaken as a minor, non-material change.

(PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.) Some of the photographs and illustrations in the Plan have captions, particularly in the Heritage section, but many others do not. It would be helpful to users of the Plan if other photograph captions could be added, where appropriate, particularly those showing various locations and landmarks in the Parish, albeit this is not necessary to meet the Basic Conditions.

- 4.55 As an advisory comment, when the Plan is being re-drafted to take account of the recommended modifications in this report, it should be re-checked for any typographical errors and any other consequential changes, etc.

Proposed Parish Projects

- 4.56 The draft Plan also contains a section on Proposed Parish Projects. Although these include projects which could potentially be funded by future contributions secured as part of Section 106 Agreements linked to planning permissions in the Plan area or to Community Infrastructure Levy receipts payable to the Parish Council, I have not considered the proposed projects as part of this examination as they are not land-use planning matters for examination.

Concluding Remarks

- 4.57 I conclude that, with the recommended modifications to the Plan as summarised above and set out in full in the accompanying Appendix, the Buckland Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2033 meets the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood plans.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Buckland Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2033 has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the Plan, and the supporting documents submitted with the Plan together with the Parish and Council's responses to my preliminary questions.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify certain policies and other matters to ensure that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. I conclude that the Buckland Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2033, as modified, has no policy or proposal which I consider to be significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond that boundary. I therefore recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan, should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 It is clear that the Buckland Neighbourhood Plan is the product of much hard work undertaken by the Parish Council and the many individuals and stakeholders who have contributed to the preparation and development of the Plan. In my assessment, the Plan reflects the land use aspirations and objectives of the Buckland community for the future planning of their parish up to 2033. The output is a Plan which should help guide the area's development over that period, making a positive contribution to informing decision-making on planning applications by Buckinghamshire Council.

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

Appendix: Examiner Modifications (PMs)

Page references are to those in the submitted draft Buckland Neighbourhood Plan.

PM1 Page 8

Insert new sub-section, to precede the sub-section entitled 'Settlement Boundary', as follows:

"Impact of New Residential Development

In March 2022, Natural England advised Buckinghamshire Council that all proposals for new residential development in the Zone of Influence of the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will need to demonstrate how each proposed development that results in a net increase in dwellings will avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of that SAC. The Zone of Influence includes the whole of Buckland Parish and all parties considering proposals for new residential development in the parish should seek the advice of Buckinghamshire Council and Natural England before submitting any planning applications. This is an interim position effective from March 2022, which is expected to be replaced by a long-term strategic solution in due course. All proposals will also need to take account of the relevant policies in this Plan."

PM2 Page 8

Policy BP1 – Housing Settlement Boundary

Amend title of the policy to **"Settlement Boundary"**, with a similar amendment to the title of Appendix H (page 35) and to the Contents pages (pages 2 and 3).

Delete the final two sentences of the supporting justification to the policy.

Delete the text of the policy in full and replace with:

"The Plan defines a settlement boundary for Buckland which is shown on the map at Appendix H to the Plan. Proposals for appropriate infill development within the settlement boundary will be supported, subject to such proposals satisfying the requirements of other relevant policies in this Plan.

Development proposals on land outside the defined settlement boundary and not within the designated Metropolitan Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (as shown on the map at Appendix C) will not be supported unless such proposals satisfy the requirements of other relevant policies in this Plan and the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan."

PM3 Page 9

Policy BP2 – Development within and adjacent to the Conservation Area

Delete the word “permitted” in the first line of text and replace with “**supported**”.

PM4 Page 10

Policy BP3 – AONB and Green Belt

Replace the word “exceptional” in the second line of text with the word “**special**”.

Replace the word “exceptional” in the sixth line of text with the words “**very special**”.

PM5 Page10

Policy BP4 – Local Distinctiveness

Insert the word “**and**” before the word “height” in the third line of text and delete the preceding comma.

PM6 Pages 11 and 30

Policy BP5 – No Further Coalescence

Delete the word “permitted” in the first line of text and replace with “**supported**”.

Amend second paragraph of policy text to read:

“A number of views and vistas within the Parish, not only in relation to the Conservation Area and the AONB, but also in other parts of the Plan area, are very important in order to retain the rural character of the area. These views and vistas are notated on the map at Appendix D/1.”

Appendix D/1

Amend title of this Appendix to read “**Important views and vistas within the Parish**”.

Delete all arrow notations that are shown on the map, in part or in whole, on land that is outside the Parish boundary.

PM7 Page 12

Policy BP6 – New Development

Delete the first sentence of text and replace with:

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“Within the Plan area, in areas of existing built development, the development of infill sites will be supported, as long as the proposed development respects the characteristics and environment of the surrounding area, and the design and layout of development schemes respects the local distinctiveness.”

PM8 Page 13

Policy BP7 – Meeting Local Housing Needs

Amend the third sentence of text to read as follows:

“If necessary, the Parish Council will support the removal of permitted development rights from these properties to ensure they continue to meet this need in the future.”

PM9 Page 14

Policy BP9 – Local Businesses

Replace the word “Neighbourhood” with the word **“Plan”** in the second line of text.

Delete the words “And that:” between the third and fourth policy criteria.

Delete the text of the final policy criterion and replace with:

- **“The design of any new buildings satisfies the relevant policies in this Plan.”**

PM10 Page 15

Policy BP10 – Re-use of Redundant Farm Buildings

Delete the word “permitted” in the second line of text and replace with **“supported”**.

PM11 Page 16

Policy BP11 – Provision of on-site car parking spaces

Add a new second paragraph of text to read as follows:

“Policy T6 and Appendix B in the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan provide further information on Buckinghamshire Council’s adopted car parking standards for new developments.”

PM12 Page 16

Policy BP12 – Business traffic

Add a new second paragraph of text to read as follows:

“Development proposals should take into account Buckinghamshire Council’s adopted non-residential car parking standards and guidance set out at Appendix B in the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.”

PM13 Page 20

Policy BP14 – Heritage

Delete the first paragraph of policy text and replace with the following text:

“Designated and non-designated heritage assets are identified in Appendix F & G. Development proposals will not be supported that would have a negative impact on any heritage asset or its setting. Any development proposal which would directly or indirectly detract from the significance of locally important designated heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting will be resisted. In considering applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.”

PM14 Page 23

Policy BP15 – Biodiversity

Amend the first sentence of text to read as follows:

“Proposals for new development in the Plan area must protect and enhance the biodiversity and wildlife in the parish by:”.

PM15 Page 24

Policy BP16 – Infrastructure

Delete the existing text in full and replace with the following text:

“Proposals for the improvement and enhancement of community infrastructure services and facilities in the Plan area, including in particular the provision of improved broadband infrastructure serving the parish, will be supported, subject to any new infrastructure developments being designed and sited to minimise their impact upon the character and appearance of the settlement and the surrounding countryside.”