

Winslow Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2022-2033

**A report to Buckinghamshire Council on the Winslow
Neighbourhood Development Plan Review**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Buckinghamshire Council in August 2022 to carry out the independent examination of the Winslow Neighbourhood Plan Review.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 September 2022.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on promoting new housing and employment development and securing the development of a new sports and recreation facility.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
5 December 2022

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Winslow Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2022-2033 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Buckinghamshire Council (BC) by Winslow Town Council (WTC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood area was designated in February 2013 by the former Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC). AVDC has been incorporated into the newly-created Buckinghamshire Council since 1 April 2020.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019 and 2021. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises as a result of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance whilst promoting new residential, employment and recreational development.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the neighbourhood area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by BC, with the consent of WTC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both BC and WTC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have over 35 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan as submitted should proceed to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

Other examination matters

- 2.6 In examining the Plan, I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
 - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
 - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met.

3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Modification Statement.
- the Environmental Report.
- the State of the Town report.
- the Buckinghamshire Council SEA/HRA Screening report.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- WTC's responses to the clarification note.
- the BC Delegated Officer Report on the planning application for land south of Buckingham Road (20/03556/AOP).
- the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2017-2033).
- the made Winslow Neighbourhood Plan (2014).
- the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 September 2022. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

The examination arrangements

3.3 Regulation 15(1)(f) of the 2012 Regulations requires a qualifying body submitting a Modification Statement to state whether it considers that the modifications contained in the Statement, if implemented, are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan, and to give reasons why the qualifying body is of that opinion. WTC submitted a very comprehensive Modification Statement. It follows the order of the policies in the made Plan, and identifies the deletion, amendment, replacement, relocation, or renumbering of each policy in the proposed modified Plan.

3.4 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 identifies the circumstances that might arise as and when qualifying bodies seek to review 'made' neighbourhood plans and introduces a proportionate process to do so based on the changes proposed. There are three types of modification which can be made to a neighbourhood plan or order. The process will depend on the degree of change which the modification involves and as follows:

- minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum; or

- material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order and which would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan; or
- material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.

3.5 In the submitted Modification Statement WTC considers that the proposed modifications are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the made Plan. In its opinion, the modifications fall into three categories:

- those required to reflect legislative change, the evolving requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework or allocations made by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan adopted in September 2021;
- those which reflect the passage of time or previously unforeseen changes of circumstance; and
- those which reflect the weight of public opinion as determined during the consultation process.

WTC has decided to make no further changes to the Plan at this stage but to review the its contents again when the forthcoming Buckinghamshire Local Plan is nearing adoption. This is very pragmatic approach.

3.6 Having considered all the information, including the representations received on the Plan, I concluded that the significance or substance of the modifications proposed to the Plan by WTC is such that it requires both an examination and a referendum. In this context, I have concluded that the proposed modifications are so significant as to change the nature of the Plan. I reached this decision for the following reasons:

- the submitted Plan includes several policies which are material modifications to the made neighbourhood plan;
- the submitted review of the Plan proposes an extended area of land for both recreational purposes (Policy 6) and for employment development (Policy 5); and
- the submitted review of the Plan is responding to the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2033 whereas the 'made' Plan responded to an earlier development plan context.

3.7 I advised BC and WTC of this conclusion. WTC subsequently confirmed that it was content for the examination of the Plan to proceed. In these circumstances, I have examined the Plan in accordance under Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The remainder of this report sets out the findings of the examination.

The format of the examination

- 3.8 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations and that a hearing was not required.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such, the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), WTC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies. It is a good example of a statement of this type. It sets out key findings in a concise report which is underpinned with a series of more detailed tables and appendices.
- 4.3 The Statement sets out details of the range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the initial stages of the Plan. They were influenced by the Covid pandemic in 2020. The principal means of engagement was the production of an A3 leaflet which was circulated to every household, business, and organisation in the neighbourhood area. It was also used for the parallel engagement with statutory agencies. The wider process is described in Appendices A-D of the Statement.
- 4.4 The Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community. It also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (January to February 2022). Appendix G provides the details of the way in which the Plan was refined as a result of this process. This analysis contributes significantly to the legibility of the relevant information and helps to describe how the Plan has progressed to the submission stage.
- 4.5 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. BC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by BC. It ended on 4 August 2022. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
- Winslow Developments
 - Buckinghamshire Council
 - Natural England
 - Crevichon Properties
 - Land and Partners

- Gladman Developments Limited

4.7 Comments were also received from seven residents.

4.8 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to specific representations on a policy-by-policy basis.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Winslow. Its population in 2011 was 4407 persons living in 2016 households. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 25 February 2013 by the former AVDC.
- 5.2 Winslow is the principal settlement in the neighbourhood area. It is an attractive market town and its historic core is a designated conservation area. The town has great variety of density, building ages and materials. The A413 (Buckingham to Aylesbury) is the principal road in the neighbourhood area. In recent months work has begun on constructing a new station for the town as part of the East-West Rail project which will re-establish the former route between Oxford and Cambridge. The station is scheduled for completion in Summer 2023 and it is anticipated that the route between Oxford–Bletchley will be operational in 2024.
- 5.3 The remainder of the neighbourhood area is attractive rolling countryside. It provides an attractive setting for the town.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan for the neighbourhood area is well-developed and up-to-date. The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013 to 2033 (VALP) was adopted in September 2021.
- 5.5 Policy S2 (Spatial Strategy for Growth) comments that the primary focus of strategic levels of growth and investment will be at Aylesbury, and development at Buckingham, Winslow, Wendover and Haddenham supported by growth at other larger, medium, and smaller villages. It comments that Winslow will accommodate growth of 870 new homes, linked with the development of East-West Rail and the new railway station in Winslow.
- 5.6 Policy S3 (Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development) continues this approach. It comments that other than for specific proposals which accord with policies in the Plan to support thriving rural communities and the development of allocations in the Plan, new development in the countryside should be avoided, especially where it would compromise the character of the countryside between settlements, and result in a negative impact on the identities of neighbouring settlements or communities leading to their coalescence.
- 5.7 In addition to Policies S2 and S3, the following policies in the VALP have been particularly important in underpinning the approach taken in the submitted Plan:
- H1 Affordable Housing
 - H6a Housing Mix
 - E4 Working from Home
 - BE1 Heritage Assets
 - BE2 Design of new development

- NE6 Local Green Space
- NE8 Trees, hedgerows, and woodlands
- I3 Community facilities, infrastructure and asserts of community value

5.8 The submitted Plan has been prepared within its up-to-date development plan context. In doing so, it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter. The submitted Plan seeks to add value to the different components of the development plan and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 September 2022. I approached from Buckingham to the north. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape in general and its accessibility to the road network.
- 5.10 I looked initially at the part of the town around its northern entrance. I saw the impact of the construction of East-West railway on this part of the town. I also saw the existing employment uses in this part of the town.
- 5.11 I took time to look at the proposed Sports Hub to the north of Buckingham Road.
- 5.12 I saw the attractiveness and layout of the town centre and its historic assets. This part of the visit helped me to understand Policy 10 of the Plan on town centre uses and the wider approach set out in the Plan towards heritage assets.
- 5.13 I also looked at the Heart of Winslow and the Winslow Centre. In the former area, I enjoyed looking at the fascinating information boards in the Arboretum.
- 5.14 I left the neighbourhood area on the A413 towards Whitchurch. This helped me to understand further the rural context within which the town is located.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.
- 6.2 As part of this process, I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
 - be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings:

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Winslow Neighbourhood Development Plan Review:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the VALP;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF, I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies that address a range of development and environmental matters. It has a focus on concentrating new developments in the town and safeguarding and extending its recreational facilities.
- 6.8 At a more practical level, the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph ID:41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. Most of the recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes policies for residential development (Policy 2), employment development (Policy 5) and the shopping area (Policy 10). In the social role, it includes policies on affordable housing (Policy 3), on community facilities (Policies 6 and 7) and on local green spaces (Policy 12). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has policies on housing design (Policy 4) and environment and heritage (Policy 13). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in this part of Buckinghamshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. Subject

to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, WTC updated the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared for the initial Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that it is unlikely that significant environmental effects will arise from the implementation of the Plan and that SEA is not needed.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 The Plan must also show that they will not have any significant detrimental effects on any European site, as required by the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Buckinghamshire Council's Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken for VALP in early 2020 confirmed that its proposals for Winslow which relate to the main changes made in the neighbourhood plan would not have significant detrimental environmental effects as the nearest internationally significant ecological sites are in the Chilterns. BC confirmed that this HRA rescreening conclusion is valid as there has been no change in circumstance in this respect.
- 6.16 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns regarding neighbourhood plan obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with the regulations on this matter.

Human Rights

- 6.17 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Summary

- 6.18 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report, I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the neighbourhood area. The wider community and WTC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in the review of the Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (Section 41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land. It includes a series of Principles and Priorities (Section 5) after the policies.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan. The Priorities are considered thereafter.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all policies whether I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial parts of the Plan (Sections 1 to 3)

- 7.8 The Plan is well-organised and presented. It is supported by a series of helpful and well-chosen photographs. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. It includes a series of excellent maps. The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies.
- 7.9 The Introduction comments about the way in which the Plan was prepared and when the neighbourhood area was designated. It properly identifies the Plan period (in paragraph 1.2) and the neighbourhood area (on Figure A).
- 7.10 It goes on to comment about the neighbourhood plan agenda generally, the SEA/HRA process and the way in which the Plan has been reviewed. It helpfully sets out the principal changes from the made Plan.
- 7.11 Section 2 comments about the town itself. It links the town's history to its current position. It also sets out the community's views about the town through a SWOT analysis.

- 7.12 Section 3 sets out the vision and objectives for the Plan. It makes a strong functional relationship between the various issues. The very comprehensive Vision neatly summarises the approach taken as follows:

'In 2033, Winslow will have grown to become a more sustainable town that is increasingly able to meet its own needs for housing, jobs, community facilities and public and commercial services.

The town will have continued a pattern of growth started over fifty years earlier by infilling land in stages to relevant natural physical boundaries. Its population will have reached 6,750 with 3,100 homes, which comprise a mix of open market and affordable housing of all types. It has provided an increasing number of homes for older people, as well as First Homes for, primarily, younger people.

Its new railway station has improved the town's connectivity to large towns to the east and west, and to London via Aylesbury and southern Buckinghamshire, helping local people commute into and out of the town or travel to commercial and leisure facilities without using their cars on roads that have become increasingly congested. Train services also connect Winslow with other national railway routes either by through trains or by connections to other services at Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, St Neots and Cambridge.

Its primary, secondary, and special schools are popular and provide excellent education to the town's students and those in the surrounding rural area. Its improved community and sports facilities have provided the extra capacity to meet the growing needs of local residents. The number of jobs in the town has grown significantly as competitive business parks have supported local entrepreneurs and, together with the higher-level skills of the town's workforce, have attracted inward investment.

Above all, the town has retained its special historic and architectural character by carefully managing change within its built-up area and by protecting its setting and surrounding open countryside from development.'

- 7.13 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

Policy 1 A Spatial Plan for the Town

- 7.14 This Policy establishes the key spatial priority for the Plan. It defines the extent of the Winslow Settlement Boundary (WSB) as a means of establishing the furthest extent and the direction of development growth planned for the period to 2033. It directs all development in the plan period to the town of Winslow. It also comments that the wider rural area should remain as open countryside. The policy encourages and enables the completion of infilling of the urban area up to well-established physical boundaries around the town. As the Plan comments this approach will reinforce the sustainability of the town derived from its concentric pattern of housing development around the historic town centre within which most of its community facilities are located.

- 7.15 Part A of the policy sets out the broader spatial strategy for the Plan. Thereafter Parts B and C comment loosely on what will not be supported outside the settlement

boundary rather than commenting on what type of development would be supported inside the boundary. As such the overall policy takes on a rather negative tone. I recommend that Part A of the policy takes on a more positive approach in supporting development within the identified WSB rather than commenting on its wider purpose. This will provide a counterbalance to the approach then taken in Parts B and C. However, to safeguard the purposes of the policy as set out in Part A I recommend that this element of the explanation is relocated to the supporting text.

- 7.16 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. As the plan comments it will concentrate new development within a sustainable community whilst safeguarding the integrity of its surrounding rural hinterland.

Replace Part A of the policy with:

‘The Plan designates a Winslow Settlement Boundary (WSB), as shown on the Policies Map to direct future housing, economic and community-related development in the town of Winslow. Development proposals within the WSB will be supported where they comply with development plan policies.’

At the end of paragraph 4.6 add: ‘As such the overall purpose and effect of Policy 1 is based on: [at this point add a-d from the submitted Part A of the policy]’

Policy 2 Housing Developments and Allocations

- 7.17 The policy sets out the Plan’s approach to housing development and allocations. It sits at the heart of the Plan. It also takes account of development which has taken place since the Plan was initially made.
- 7.18 The policy has been designed be read with Policies 3, 4 and 6, and with VALP Policy D-WIN001 in respect of its allocation for more than 315 homes on a site to the east of Great Horwood Road. The policy allocates land for the development of new homes within the defined WSB. It replaces Policy 3 of the made Plan. It omits 250 dwellings east of Furze Lane and the allocation on Granborough Road given the level of progress on the two sites.
- 7.19 The proposed 1.6 ha site at Station Road currently comprises a range of life-expired business premises forming the Station Road Industrial Estate. It was allocated for housing in the made Plan. It is accessed from Station Road and is surrounded by residential areas. The Plan comments that the site is close to the town centre and is therefore suited to higher density housing development.
- 7.20 The Rugby Field and the adjacent Winslow Centre site extend together to about 5.9 hectares. They are owned by Buckinghamshire Council. The made Plan allocated the Rugby Field for a development of about 75 homes. That development has not begun. Following further assessment of the realistic development capacity of the sites, and the identification of an established wildlife area of 0.75 ha (within the former Rugby Field site) which needs to be set aside for ecological protection, the review of the Plan has concluded that it is necessary to relocate about 20 of the 75 homes previously allocated to the Rugby Field site to the Winslow Centre site.

- 7.21 In general terms I am satisfied that the approach taken meets the basic conditions. The submitted Plan consolidates the approach taken in the VALP and acknowledges that developments which have already proceeded no longer need to be allocated in its review.
- 7.22 Part B of the policy makes an appropriate connection with strategic policies in the VALP. Whilst the explanation is helpful it is supporting text rather than policy. As such I recommend that it is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text.

Delete Part B of the policy

At the end of paragraph 4.12 add the deleted Part B from the submitted policy

Policy 3 Affordable Housing

- 7.23 This policy sets out the Plan's approach towards affordable housing. It seeks to add local value to the approach taken in the adopted VALP. Whilst it retains the VALP site size criterion, it prefers the wider definition of affordable housing set out in the most recent version of NPPF. That definition includes not only housing for shared ownership (or discounted market sales housing or other affordable routes to home ownership) or rent at below-market rates but also First Homes.
- 7.24 The policy sets out two key issues. The first is the delivery of a minimum of 35% affordable housing on sites of 11 houses or more. The second is the mix of affordable housing based on case-by-case basis but with the aim of securing 25% of First Homes; 60% of affordable housing for rent; and 15% of homes offered for shared ownership or by other routes to affordable owned housing.
- 7.25 I sought advice from WTC on the differences between the approach in the submitted Plan and the VALP on this matter. I also sought its views on Part C of the policy which largely describes the general purposes of First Homes. It commented as follows:

'The rationale for the retention of the requirement of 35% affordable housing for sites in Winslow is essentially as stated at paragraph 4.29: it was the target approved in the 2014 referendum which preceded the making of the existing Neighbourhood Plan; there is unmet demand for affordable housing accommodation; it has proved effective in practice in that developers of relevant sites within the town have been willing to comply with it (presumably in the knowledge that such a proportion is commercially viable—the would-be developers of the land adjacent to the railway station are even proposing 50% affordable housing); and no respondent to the various consultations already undertaken, save for Buckinghamshire Council (BC), has suggested a variation of it. Section 106 agreements which include 35% affordable housing are already in place for the WIN001 site, and are close to completion for Station Road, whilst BC as promoter of the development of the Winslow Centre and Rugby Field housing sites has confirmed it is planning to achieve 35% affordable housing in those areas. These agreements and assurances already cover all relevant development sites identified in the modified WNP.'

- 7.26 Taking account of all the relevant information I am satisfied that the policy has been carefully considered. There is no suggestion from developers that the figure of 35%

affordable housing is either unreasonable or unachievable. In addition, there is no direct conflict with the approach taken in the VALP as the delivery of affordable housing would be higher than the VALP minimum figure.

- 7.27 I recommend that part C of the policy is deleted and reposition into the supporting text. It explains the purposes of the policy rather than functioning as policy.
- 7.28 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will assist significantly in delivering the social dimension of sustainable development.

Delete part C of the policy

Reposition Part C of the policy to the end of paragraph 4.29

Policy 4 Housing Design

- 7.29 This policy sets out the Plan's approach to housing design.
- 7.30 The Plan comments that the VALP contains extensive guidance on the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets, and on sympathetic new development, to which the Plan does not seek to add, save by drawing attention to the need to take specific account of the findings from the appraisal of the Winslow Conservation Area. It also advises that the policy should be read with VALP Policies BE1 and BE2.
- 7.31 The Plan looks to ensure high standards of design through a careful application of the Character Appraisal in the Conservation Area. It also seeks to apply that approach elsewhere in the town. I sought WTC's comments on approach outside the Conservation Area. It commented:
- 'Winslow's conservation area is extensive with the consequence that the number of properties and potential properties close to it is substantial. The Policy's aim is to ensure that development outside, but within sight of, the conservation area is sympathetic in design and does not undermine the visual value of the conservation area. All the sites identified at Policy 2 are in close proximity to the conservation area, in some cases adjoining it, and Part B is intended to supplement what is said in that Policy, while not confining the requirement to those sites alone.'*
- 7.32 I have considered this matter very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the approach taken in Part B of the policy is refined to ensure the wider integrity of the Conservation Area and the differences between its character and the remainder of the town. I recommend that the reference to the Character Appraisal for schemes elsewhere in the town is repositioned from the policy into the supporting text.
- 7.33 I also recommend a detailed modification to the first part of the policy so that the wording corresponds to that in national legislation on conservation areas.
- 7.34 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It celebrates the earlier work on the Character Appraisal. It is also an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

In Part A replace ‘respect’ with ‘preserve’

Replace Part B with:

‘Housing development proposals elsewhere in the town should reflect the character of Winslow in their scale, siting, layout, materials, landscaping, and design details. Modern and distinctive design solutions will be supported where they take account of the wider character of the town.’

At the end of paragraph 4.32 add: ‘The first part of the policy refers to proposals within the Conservation Area or within its setting. The principles of the Conservation Area Appraisal will be applied to such proposals. Whilst the Appraisal will not directly apply to proposals elsewhere in the town, it should be used as a basis to identify the types of distinctive development which would be supported. In addition, all development proposals throughout the town should also follow the most recent relevant national and local Design Guide principles for the area at the time when an application for permission is submitted.’

Policy 5 Employment

- 7.35 This policy sets out the Plan’s approach to new employment development in the town. Part A of the policy refers to two parcels of land to the north of the town off Buckingham Road. Part C of the policy refers to land at Tinkers Lane off Granborough Road
- 7.36 Part A (a) of the policy refers to the residue of the land allocated by WNP2014 Policy 6. The previous allocation for the railway station and ancillary features has been omitted as planning permission has been granted and work has commenced, and the allocation for education use has been omitted as the site has been developed and is in use. Part A(b) of the policy replicates WNP2014 Policy 7, but is modified in that the position of the site differs, in order to accommodate the increase in the extent of the site referred to at Policy 6.
- 7.37 The Plan comments that allocating land for employment uses remains vital to the goal of increasing the town’s self-sufficiency for local jobs and the provision of training for local people and of avoiding becoming a commuter town reliant on other towns for jobs.
- 7.38 In general terms I am satisfied that the proposed allocation of land off Buckingham Road for employment use meets the basic conditions. The highways infrastructure is in place and the forthcoming development of the railway station will improve the accessibility and profile of the two sites. In addition, as the Plan comments further employment development will help to ensure an appropriate balance between housing and employment development in the town.
- 7.39 Crevichon Properties have made a very detailed representation on the policy. In summary it comments that land either side of George Pass Avenue (as identified in Part A (a) of the policy) has been allocated for employment use for 18 years without being realised despite planning permission being secured and over 10 years of marketing. It also comments that it has been a stakeholder in the town for over 12 years and has secured the delivery of a new secondary school and new railway station.

The company has commented in earlier representations that land at George Pass Avenue is not suitable for employment use and should be re-allocated for residential use. The representation is supported by two Housing Needs Assessments and an Employment Needs Assessment.

- 7.40 As set out in paragraph 1.4 of this report, my role is to examine the submitted Plan rather than to propose an alternative plan. In this context the suggested allocation of the two sites for residential use has not been tested through consultation. In these circumstances I will restrict my examination of this policy to the details in the submitted Plan.
- 7.41 As the site owners comment planning applications were initially approved for employment development on the site in 2007. That consented development has not proceeded. The most recent activity was in July 2018 when approval of reserved matters was granted for two alternative schemes on the site referred to as Scheme A (18/02598/ADP) and Scheme B (18/02599/ADP). The Scheme A consent was for an office building on the front plot and 11 small industrial buildings on the rear plot. The Scheme B consent was for a single employment building on each plot.
- 7.42 The planning history of the site also includes applications for residential development. In July 2016, an outline application was submitted for residential development of 65 homes at the site (16/02768/AOP). That application was not determined and an appeal for non-determination was made but was subsequently withdrawn. More recently, in October 2020 a revised outline application was submitted for a development of 60 homes (20/03556/AOP). The application was refused planning permission in January 2022. The main reason for refusal related to the site's allocation within the made Plan for employment use and the view that policy E2 of the VALP (which allows the use of employment sites for alternative uses) had not been fully satisfied. Paragraphs 5.44 and 5.45 of the committee report comment that:

'the site allocation at Winslow was never intended as a strategic allocation but rather a local allocation to provide local employment opportunities in Winslow. It is an important employment site for meeting local needs and therefore should be safeguarded for this purpose. From a sustainability and local employment point of view it will remain important to continue to protect designated employment sites such as this away from the larger urban areas. Given the lack of availability of sites like this in the locality it will perform an important role in servicing Winslow. Employment opportunities being located close to where people live is both important for encouraging sustainable travel patterns and for providing balanced communities comprising a mix of uses.'

An appeal against the refusal has been submitted and is yet to be determined.

- 7.43 In the circumstances of the outcomes of recent planning applications for residential development on the site, I am satisfied that the approach taken in the submitted Plan is appropriate and meets the basic conditions. Whilst I have taken account of the findings of the Employment Needs Assessment, I am not convinced that it has fully assessed the potential impacts on the accessibility and attractiveness of the town following the opening of the railway station on the East-West railway line. I have also

taken account of BC's approach to the most recent application for housing development on the site as set out in the committee report.

- 7.44 I have made broader recommendations about a potential further review of the neighbourhood plan in paragraph 7.86 of this report. In this context I recommended that the ongoing allocation of site A (a) is re-assessed at a future point in the Plan period. This may coincide with a broader review of the Plan in general terms, or following the adoption of the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan in particular. At that point the effect of the opening of the railway station on the prosperity of the town will be clearer. In addition, the outcome of the current appeal for residential use on the site will be available.
- 7.45 Part B of the policy comments about the need for a master plan for the site to the north of Buckingham Road. I recommend a detailed modification so that it takes on a policy status rather than reading as a condition on a planning application.
- 7.46 I am satisfied in principle that the allocation of land at Tinkers End (Part C of the policy) meets the basic conditions. I recommend a modification to remove unnecessary descriptive text in that part of the policy.

In part B of the policy replace the final part with: 'and consistent with any previously agreed master plan referred to in Policy 6 should be prepared as part of the submission of a planning application for the development of the site'

In Part C delete 'a site which has been used for many years as workshops,'

Policy 6 Sports and Recreation Facilities

- 7.47 This policy is derived from and expands on Policy 13 of the made Plan for the creation of a new Sports Hub for the town comprising a range of Class F2 land uses. Part A(a) comments about the replacement of the rugby pitch and Parts A(b), (c) and (d) comment about the replacement of the facilities displaced from the former Winslow Centre site (as specifically addressed Policy 9). These playing areas, together with the ancillary facilities, open land for general recreation and footpaths are to be provided by Buckinghamshire Council, which owns the Rugby Field, the Winslow Centre site, and the site to which this policy relates. The policy comments that the replacement facilities must meet the requirements of Sport England, and satisfy WTC that they will be equivalent to, or will improve upon, the sports facilities formerly at the rugby field and the Winslow Centre site. The Plan comments that it is expected that funds generated from developments elsewhere in Winslow in accordance with section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or otherwise will be utilised in providing some or all the facilities listed at Parts A(e), (f) and (g) of the policy possibly over time.
- 7.48 The policy is both forward-looking and ambitious. Its approach commendably sets out the details anticipated for the wider package of sporting facilities on the site.
- 7.49 I sought WTC's comments on the timetable for the proposed Sports Hub and its relationship with the proposed development of the Winslow Centre. It commented:

'The intention is to replace the displaced facilities in tandem with the redevelopment of the Winslow Centre site, the latter (in broad terms) providing the finance for the former. No sequencing has yet been determined and WTC recognises that at this stage a precise timetable cannot be set out. For that reason, Policy 9 Part B goes no further than to require the agreement, to which Sport England is to be a party, of a development programme which will ensure that the replacement facilities are provided within a reasonable timescale.'

- 7.50 In the round I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. To bring the clarity required by the NPPF I recommend two modifications to the policy. The first reconfigures the final paragraph of Part A (which comments about associated facilities) so that it offers support for their development rather than simply commenting on the need for such facilities. The second simplifies the final element of Part B of the policy. As submitted the policy is too detailed and prescriptive on the prior submission of details to WTC before any planning application is submitted.
- 7.51 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute significantly to the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

Replace the final paragraph of Part A of the policy with:

'The development of ancillary facilities, including toilets, changing rooms, function rooms and a café, together with storage for sports and ground maintenance equipment will also be supported in order to meet the needs of all users of these sports and recreational facilities.'

Replace the final part of the policy (after the criteria a-d in Part B) with:

'and consistent with any previously agreed master plan referred to at Policy 5, should be prepared as part of the submission of a planning application for the development of the site'

Policy 7 Medical Facilities

- 7.52 This policy reflects current circumstances in the town about medical facilities. Until Spring 2022 the intention was that the town's existing medical facilities, currently located within a Grade II listed building and adjacent health centre, would be re-housed in the proposed Winslow Centre redevelopment. The CCG and the medical practice then announced that the health centre would be refurbished and the space in the Winslow Centre redevelopment would not be taken. However, the expected useful life of the refurbished health centre is no more than about 10 years, and a site for a larger medical practice will need to be found within the Plan period. At present no site has been identified.
- 7.53 The Plan comments that Winslow has long needed a new medical centre to replace the current premises at Norden House and the adjacent health centre. The new centre will need to have sufficient capacity to meet the local health surgery needs of up to 12,000 patients (based on a projection of current numbers to 2033) drawn from both the town and the surrounding villages and have room for further expansion if required.

It will deliver local health services to its own patients and in addition will deliver some services to a wider geographical area in collaboration with adjacent practices.

- 7.54 I have considered this matter carefully alongside the helpful response from WTC to the question in the clarification note. I recommend that the policy is recast so that it more precisely identifies its intended outcome rather than provide a context to the position on health care. The modified policy will provide a general context within which any emerging proposals can be considered. I recommend that it comments about the capacity of the highway network to support any such proposals and the way in which the medical facilities could be incorporated within or adjacent to residential parts of the town. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

‘Development proposals for a new Medical Centre within the town will be supported where it can be satisfactorily accommodated within the local highway network and it does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of any adjacent residential properties.’

Policy 8 The Heart of Winslow

- 7.55 This Policy replaces former Policy 11, which provided for the construction of a Community Centre and ancillary parking within what is now Tomkins Park & Arboretum (formerly ‘The Paddock’). That policy will not be pursued, because it became apparent that the construction of a large building and a car park within Tomkins Park, would be not only very expensive, but also visually and environmentally unacceptable, and would lead to a considerable loss of amenity. No other site suitable for such a construction has been identified within the town.
- 7.56 The Plan comments that the Heart of Winslow comprises:
- the Recreation Ground;
 - the Tomkins Park and Arboretum providing a public park set in an area containing a range of notable trees, and a bowls green and a pétanque terrain;
 - the Public Hall, providing (after the expected improvement referred to below) a large and a small meeting room suitable for a variety of community activities;
 - the Royal British Legion Hall providing a further community meeting space;
 - the Bowls Club building, providing a meeting room; and
 - several areas of car parking to support community activities within the Heart of Winslow, as well as meeting the needs of commercial and residential occupiers of the town centre.
- 7.57 The policy comments that proposals which seek to enhance or preserve sports, recreation, and leisure facilities as well as meeting spaces for the community near the western end of Elmfields Gate will be supported. It takes a positive and non-prescriptive approach which will consolidate the wider approach being taken by WTC to this important part of the town. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy 9 Site of the former Winslow Centre

- 7.58 The former Winslow Centre site occupies a significant area near the centre of the town and is owned by Buckinghamshire Council. The policy comments that once identified facilities have been replaced (probably to the Sports Hub as set out in Policy 6), what now remains on the Winslow Centre site will be removed and the site will be re-developed in accordance with the details of the policy.
- 7.59 Part A of the policy proposes the allocation of the site for a comprehensive mixed-use development comprising some or all the following:
- The town's Community Library (Use Class F1);
 - A multifunctional space to accommodate activities within Use Classes E and/or F;
 - A development of extra-care housing comprising about 83 apartments and/or bungalows predominantly in Use Class C2 (see Policy 2A(c));
 - Approximately 20 homes formerly allocated for construction on the Rugby Field (see Policy 2A(b)), and possibly up to 30 more homes to complete a comprehensive development of the site; and
 - An area of not less than 1.3 ha of green space for recreational uses and habitat protection.
- 7.60 Part B of the policy comments about the need to establish a replacement location for the previous and existing recreation facilities on the site. Part C comments about the need for a detailed masterplan to be prepared for the development of the site.
- 7.61 Parts D and E of the policy comment about traffic-related safeguards. On this matter I sought WTC's comments about these elements of the policy given that they read as explanatory text (based on a process to be followed) rather than policy. WTC commented as follows:

'Although the Winslow Centre site (in part brownfield and in part an infill site) is ripe for redevelopment it has limited vehicular access. It is served by a single residential street, Avenue Road, which is narrow, and the houses on both sides of the affected part have no off-street parking or the space to create it. In addition, Avenue Road joins the A413, the main road between Aylesbury and Buckingham, at a junction with significantly impaired visibility because of an adjacent High Street property. WTC has considerable concerns about the impact of additional traffic on Avenue Road and its residents (paragraph 4.51 indicates that there should be no vehicular access to the redeveloped site from Park Road, which has similar parking problems and itself depends on access from Avenue Road) and on the junction with the busy A413. Thus, although it supports and welcomes the redevelopment in principle, it considers the traffic implications are of such importance that the measures specified should form part of the Policy and not merely appear in the supporting text.'

- 7.62 I looked at the proposed site carefully as part of the visit. I saw the current uses and the ways in which they related to the surrounding residential properties. I also saw the nature of Avenue Road and Park Road. In the round, I am satisfied that the policy has been well-developed. It will help to consolidate community facilities in the town and

bring forward new homes in a sustainable location. In addition, the policy is non-prescriptive and provides for a degree of flexibility in terms of the way in which the mix of new development is arranged. In reaching this conclusion I have taken account of the views of the representations of residents.

- 7.63 In several respects the policy takes on the format more usually seen as conditions on a planning application and of supporting text to a policy. I have considered WTC's responses to the question raised on parts D and E of the policy. Given the importance of securing appropriate and safe access to the proposed development, I recommend that this issue is addressed in the element of the policy on the delivery of a master plan. In this context Parts D and E can then be repositioned into the supporting text whilst retaining the significance of the highways access in the policy itself.
- 7.64 I also recommend detailed modifications to the format of Parts B and C of the policy so that they have a policy format. Their contents remain unchanged.
- 7.65 I also recommend consequential modifications and additions to the supporting text.
- 7.66 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute significantly to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part B of the policy with:

'The proposed development should also incorporate a scheme for the re-provision of the facilities hitherto afforded by the Multi-Use Games Area (which has already been removed from this site), two 5-a-side football pitches, three tennis courts and a football pitch (with associated changing facilities).'

Replace Part C of the policy with:

'A detailed master plan and design code for the whole of this site should be prepared by the owners and/or proposed developers and inform the submission of planning applications for the site. The master plan should include the location and scale of built development, the location of the green space and the access arrangements into the site.'

Delete Parts D and E of the policy.

Incorporate paragraph 4.50 at the end of 4.49.

Insert a new paragraph 4.50 to read: 'Policy 9 sets out the Plan's approach to the development of this important site. Part A sets out the intended package of uses. Part B comments about the associated need to agree the relocation of the existing uses on the site. Part C comments about the need for a master plan to steer a comprehensive development of the site.'

At the end of paragraph 4.52 add: 'In these circumstances planning applications to develop this site or any part of it should be accompanied by a comprehensive Traffic Impact Assessment demonstrating how the development of the site, to the maximum extent envisaged by this policy, and after such mitigating measures as may be proposed have been taken, will neither generate traffic movements of such a level as

to impose an unacceptable burden on the local highway network; nor adversely impact established local residential vehicle parking. Any necessary independent assessment of a Traffic Impact Assessment should be undertaken by a person or body who or which has not participated, directly or indirectly, in the preparation of the Assessment.'

Policy 10 Winslow Shopping Area

- 7.67 This policy replaces Policy 17 in the made Plan. Government policy and recent legislation amending the Use Classes Order make the change of use from retail premises into residential accommodation much easier than was the case.
- 7.68 While the Plan recognises the national and local need for an increased supply of homes, and the impact on retail trades of on-line shopping, it also recognises that there is a continuing requirement for traditional High Street shops selling food, medication, and other household items. The Plan also comments that the town centre can also offer retail and studio space suitable for small craft businesses. Policy 18 of the made Plan (which envisaged the provision of a small supermarket, associated with the separate development of a large new community centre) is no longer feasible and has not been pursued.
- 7.69 In its response to the clarification note, WTC commented about its ambitions to encourage BC to pursue an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights in the town centre and the pressures for the conversion of retail units to residential use. Plainly these are matter beyond the control of the neighbourhood plan. However, with suitable modifications the approach taken in the policy will not conflict with national policy. In addition, they will provide an indication to landowners and developers about the importance which WTC attaches to the ongoing maintenance of a strong and vibrant town centre. They will also bring the clarity required for a development plan policy by the NPPF.

In the opening part of the policy replace 'supported if they' with 'supported where they'

In a) replace 'encourage' with 'are designed to ensure'

Policy 11 Traffic, Transport, Cycle Routes, and Parking

- 7.70 This is a wide-ranging policy. It has four related parts as follows:
- developers of new properties that are more than 300m walking distance from existing bus stops will be required to make appropriate capital and/or revenue contributions to secure the operation of enhanced public transport services;
 - cycle-paths (which may in appropriate circumstances be combined with footpaths) should be an integral feature within all major new developments;
 - the cycle route within development area WIN001 (Policy 2(d)) must connect with the Winslow to Buckingham cycle route; and
 - a combined cycle and pedestrian route should be created to connect the eastern end of the development on area WIN001.

- 7.71 As submitted, these various components of the policy read as principles or proposals rather than as land use policies designed to provide a local interpretation of the various Transport policies in Section 7 of the adopted Local Plan. I sought advice from WTC on the policy and have taken account of its helpful comments.
- 7.72 On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the policy is replaced by one which has a general format and provides a general context for major residential development proposals to contribute towards public transport facilities. As WTC commented the specific reference to 300m on Part A of the policy has already been addressed through the delivery of the allocation of Policy D-WIN001 in the VALP and does not apply to other development.
- 7.73 I also recommend that the replacement policy consolidates the approach taken in Part B of the policy on the creation of cycle/footpaths within major developments.
- 7.74 As WTC comment in its response to the clarification note the third and fourth parts of the policy are already being addressed through the delivery of the allocation of Policy D-WIN001 in the VALP. In these circumstances I recommend the deletion of Parts C and D of the policy. I also recommend consequential modifications to the supporting text.

Replace the policy with:

‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location proposals for major residential development should make capital and/or revenue contributions to secure the operation of enhanced public transport services to meet the eventual needs of residents in such properties.

Cycle-paths (which may in appropriate circumstances be combined with footpaths) should be incorporated as integral design features within major new developments and create useful and effective links for cyclists and pedestrians within the town and, for cyclists, with existing national and local cycle routes.’

Delete paragraphs 4.66 and 4.67.

Policy 12 Local Green Spaces

- 7.75 This Policy replaces Policy 19 of the made Plan which designated a series of local green spaces (LGS). It modifies that policy by:
- segregating the Recreation Ground and Three Hills, which are not contiguous;
 - omitting the reference to the cycle track (which it is not appropriate to designate as Local Green Space);
 - acknowledging that the land at the rear of Winslow Hall, formerly known as The Paddock, is now called Tomkins Park & Arboretum; and
 - clarifying the descriptions now appearing at (d), (e) and (f).
- 7.76 The Plan continues to recognise the importance of open green space for exercise, recreation, and such activities as dog walking, as well as for quiet contemplation. As

such it seeks to preserve, protect, and enhance as much as possible of the town's existing green spaces which are used for those purposes.

- 7.77 This policy has been carefully considered. It takes account of WTC's consideration of the various LGSs since they were designated in the made Plan. The policy approach has regard to paragraph 103 of the NPPF.
- 7.78 In all these circumstances I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions.

Policy 13 Environment and Heritage

- 7.79 This is a new policy. It reflects national planning policy, the provisions of VALP Policy I1 and the concerns of many residents expressed in the consultation as part of the review of the Plan. Part A of the policy address biodiversity, trees, and hedges and Part B addresses heritage assets.
- 7.80 I sought WTC's comments on the extent to which the policy adds any distinctive local value beyond national and local policies. I have taken account of WTC's comments in formulating the recommended modifications.
- 7.81 In part A of the policy, I recommend a modification to the first sentence so that it can be applied proportionately to the development proposed. In part B of the policy, I recommend that the initial element on the conservation area is deleted as it does not add value to national or local policies. In addition, I recommend that the second element of this part of the policy is recast so that it sets out what is required from development proposals.

Replace the first sentence of Part A of the policy with:

'As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should include landscaping which incorporates green space, hedges, and trees, where practicable of local provenance, that are relevant to the type of development as well as sensitive habitats and other relevant measures to promote biodiversity within the natural environment.'

Replace part B of the policy with:

'Development proposals should respond positively to publicly available views of listed buildings and other heritage assets of the town. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the setting on listed buildings and other heritage assets will not be supported'

Principles and Priorities

- 7.82 Section 5 of the Plan includes a series of Principles and Priorities. They are non-land use issues which have naturally come forward in the plan-preparation process. They are properly set out in a separate part of the Plan as recommended by national policy. They are presented under the following headings:

- the establishment of the new Sports Hub proposed for north of Buckingham Road, in order to provide for facilities displaced from the former Winslow Centre

site (thereby freeing that site for development), together with other recreational opportunities;

- the establishment of new openly-accessible green space and recreational areas on both the Sports Hub and the former Winslow Centre sites to address the evident deficit in provision of such spaces within the town and to cope with the town's increased population;
- the delivery of improved facilities for community meetings, social functions, and leisure activities within the town;
- the establishment of an additional area for employment to the north of Buckingham Road;
- the provision of publicly-accessible facilities for charging electric vehicles particularly for those residents who have no alternative opportunities to charge their cars, and for those passing through the town; and
- in the longer term, the provision of a new medical centre within the town to replace the existing Norden House surgery and adjacent Health Centre, in order to cater for the increasing population of the area, and the extended range of services required to be delivered by the local health services.

7.83 I am satisfied that the Priorities are both appropriate and distinctive to the neighbourhood area. In each case they identify the delivery agencies concerned. In some cases, they will complement the implementation of the land use policies.

Future Review of the Plan

7.84 BC is working to have a new county-wide local plan in place by April 2025. That local plan will cover the period up to 2040. BC expect the formal plan process to run from 2022 to 2024. The later stages of the Plan process, including publication, submission and examination could take place during 2024 and into early 2025.

7.85 The review of the neighbourhood plan has been underpinned by the adoption of the VALP. This is an entirely appropriate process. As paragraph 1.11 of the Plan comments as time passed it also became clear that the adoption of VALP would be followed relatively quickly by the preparation and adoption of the new Local Plan covering the whole of Buckinghamshire which will replace the VALP. Accordingly, it was decided that the proposed review of the Plan would focus on changes that need to be made to its policies to ensure it would remain relevant for a further few years, but go no further. WTC intend that a full review and replacement of the Plan will take place alongside and following the completion of the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan. In these circumstances I recommend that WTC should consider the need for a full or partial review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan.

7.86 I have also recommended in paragraph 7.44 of this report that either at that time (or possibly earlier) WTC considers the ongoing applicability of Policy 5 depending on the extent to which employment development comes forward on the allocated site to the south of Buckingham Road.

At the end of paragraph 1.11 add: ‘In these circumstances the Town Council should consider the need for a full or partial review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan.’

Other Matters – General

- 7.87 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly as a result of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan as a result of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters. It will be appropriate for BC and WTC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies and to accommodate any administrative and technical changes.

Other Matters – Specific

- 7.88 BC has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. I have included them in the recommended modifications on a policy-by-policy basis where they are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.89 I also recommend a more general modification to the text of the Plan based on BC’s comments insofar as it is necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. It relates to the more general parts of the Plan as follows:

Under the third objective (page 20); ‘To protect the special historic and landscape character of the town and its surroundings’, change the wording of ‘To protect’ to ‘To preserve and enhance’. This would be consistent with paragraph 206 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 7.90 BC also raise a series of other matters (mainly relating to nature conservation and biodiversity matters). Their incorporation into the Plan would extend its coverage and addresses such issues in greater detail and to good effect. Nevertheless, these matters are not necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. Neighbourhood plan legislation has given considerable flexibility to qualifying bodies to include the issues which they see fit to feature in their plans. As such it is beyond my remit to recommend modifications to the Plan so that it is expanded beyond the scope as chosen by WTC.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2033. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area and to allocate sites for housing and employment use.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Winslow Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to Buckinghamshire Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Winslow Neighbourhood Development Plan Review should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by the former Aylesbury Vale District Council on 25 February 2013.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
5 December 2022