

# **North Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2035**

**A report to Buckinghamshire Council on the North  
Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1 I was appointed by Buckinghamshire Council in July 2022 to carry out the independent examination of the North Marston Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 July 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 two specific matters. The first is the proposed definition of a Settlement Boundary. The second is the designation of a package of local green spaces.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. It is clear that 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**  
**20 October 2022**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the North Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2035 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Buckinghamshire Council (BC) by North Marston Parish Council (NMPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood area was designated in 2018 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 or not 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 in particular. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance.
- 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 NMPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both BC and NMPC. 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 Design Code.
- the Buckinghamshire Council SEA/HRA Screening report (November 2021).
- the representations made to the Plan.
- NMPC's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2017-2033).
- the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 July 2022. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

3.3 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), NMPC 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. In particular 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 records the various activities that were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. It also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (December 2021 to February 2022). Annexe 2 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.
- 4.4 The Statement sets out details of the range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the initial stages of the Plan which included:
- the launch of the work on the Plan at the Annual Parish Meeting and the Church Fete (May and June 2018 respectively);
  - the use of posters;
  - the use of the Parish Council website;
  - the Open House meeting (July 2018);
  - the questionnaire delivered to every household in the neighbourhood area (November 2018);
  - the consultation with parish organisations;
  - the use of editorial updates in the North Marston and Granborough Magazine; and
  - online publicity including a Facebook page.
- 4.5 It is clear 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 23 June 2022. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
- Buckinghamshire Council
  - Natural England
  - Webb Developments Limited
- 4.7 A comments was also received from a local resident.
- 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 North Marston. Its population in 2011 was 781 persons living in 305 households. It is located to the south of Granborough. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 25 May 2018 by the former AVDC.
- 5.2 North Marston is the principal settlement in the parish. It is an attractive village. Its historic core is a designated conservation area. The village has great variety of density, building ages and materials. Whilst there are some framed cottages little thatch remains. There are terrace houses north of the Green and on School Hill but elsewhere the houses are spaced out in gardens. Two-storey red brick buildings with plain tile roofing are the predominate buildings. In its original form, North Marston was a linear village with a nucleus of buildings grouped around the Church at the south-eastern end. More recent developments which have taken place at either end of the main street have changed this basic form. The High Street is bordered to the north-east by the long, narrow village green. The area is well enclosed, the southern end being particularly well-defined by the close pattern of buildings.
- 5.3 The remainder of the neighbourhood area is attractive rolling countryside. As the Plan describes, the parish is predominantly in agricultural use with large open fields bounded by hedgerows. There is very little woodland other than occasional planted copses scattered around the village. The village contains multiple waterways (streams and pond systems) owing to the clay substrate. In Winter months, the surrounding countryside often becomes waterlogged. There are several examples of ridge and furrow in the fields surrounding the village

### *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. North Marston is identified as one of a series of medium villages. The VALP comments that medium villages have some provision key services and facilities, making them moderately sustainable locations for development. Whilst the Plan allocates sites for development in some of the medium villages this is not the case in North Marston.
- 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. The policy also comments about the importance of maintaining the individual identity of villages and avoiding extensions to built-up areas that might lead to further coalescence between settlements.

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. It is clear that 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 24 July 2022. I approached from North Marston to the south. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape in general and its accessibility to the road network in particular.

5.10 I saw the attractiveness and layout of the village and its historic assets. I took time to look at the proposed Settlement Boundary, the proposed local heritage assets and the proposed local green spaces.

## 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 of particular relevance to the North Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- 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 securing good design standards for new development and in concentrating new development in a sustainable location.
- 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. The majority of my 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 infill residential development in the settlement boundary (Policy SD1). In the social role, it includes policies on housing mix (Policy SD2), on community facilities (Policy C1) and on local green spaces (Policy C2). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built and historic environment. It has policies on rural character (Policy E1), the conservation area (Policy E2), the local landscape (Policy NE1), biodiversity (Policy NE2) and design (Policy SD3). 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, BC undertook a screening exercise in November 2021 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the 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 BC also prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. It assesses the likely impact of the submitted Plan on the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation.
- 6.16 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 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 with regard to either neighbourhood plan or to European obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.

#### *Human Rights*

- 6.18 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*

- 6.19 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. In particular, 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 Plan area. The wider community and NMPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their 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 Aspirations after the policies.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan. The Aspirations are considered thereafter.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not 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 5)*

- 7.8 The Plan as a whole 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.
- 7.9 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies. The Introduction comments about the way in which the Plan was prepared and when the neighbourhood area was designated. It properly identifies the neighbourhood area. I recommend that it also describes the Plan period so that it complies with the statutory requirement for the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

### *At the end of paragraph 1.4 add: 'The plan period is 2020 to 2035'*

- 7.10 Section 2 comments about national and local planning policies which have underpinned the production of the Plan.

- 7.11 Section 3 provides information about the neighbourhood area. The interesting and comprehensive details help to set the scene for the eventual policies. It includes elements on:
- History and Heritage;
  - Landscape;
  - Services and Amenities; and
  - Population and Household data.
- 7.12 Section 4 sets out the way in which local people and organisations were engaged in the Plan. It overlaps with the Consultation Statement.
- 7.13 Section 5 sets out the vision and objectives for the Plan. It makes a strong functional relationship between the various issues. The Vision neatly summarises the approach taken as follows:
- ‘The plan will promote a flourishing community-based parish, which maintains its rich heritage, rural landscape, and agricultural environment, each of which plays an important part in the lives of its residents. Protection, enhancement, and promotion of these characteristics are the key components of the plan. It is vital that North Marston remains a thriving and sustainable parish that encourages the well-being of its residents both now and in the future.’*
- 7.14 A key element of the Plan is the way in which its policies are directly informed by the various objectives. The objectives provide a context for the range of policies.
- 7.15 Section 6 sets out a series of distinctive local principles to achieve sustainable development.
- 7.16 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 E1 Rural Character

- 7.17 This policy seeks to retain the rural character of the neighbourhood area. In doing so, it identifies a series of principles with which development proposals should accord. The principles are distinctive to the character of the parish.
- 7.18 In general terms the policy takes an approach which meets the basic conditions. However, in order to bring the clarity required by the NPPF I recommend two related modifications. The first refines the format of the opening part of the policy so that it more clearly and explicitly relates to the development management process. The second ensures that the policy can be applied proportionately. As submitted, it would apply in a universal way and would take no account of the ability or otherwise of individual proposals to comply with the various design principles.
- 7.19 I also recommend some very detailed modifications to the design principles. Whilst they do not alter the approach taken, they ensure that the principles concerned can be applied consistently through the Plan period in the development management process.

This will remove the elements of uncertainty in the submitted Plan. Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions.

**Replace the opening element of the policy with:**

**‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should respond positively to the rural character and linear form of the village and its surroundings by ensuring that:’**

**In the first principle delete ‘modest and’**

**In the third principle replace ‘undue’ with ‘the’**

**In the final principle replace ‘preserved and not be obstructed’ with respected’**

Policy E2 North Marston Conservation Area and its setting

- 7.20 This policy seeks to safeguard the character and appearance of the North Marston Conservation Area. It identifies two particular matters of importance – scale and mass and the use of locally-distinctive materials.
- 7.21 I am satisfied that the policy adds distinctive parish value over and above the policy approach to conservation areas in both national and local planning policies. In addition, the supporting text is very thorough and builds on the approach taken in the Conservation Area appraisal.
- 7.22 I recommend a modification to the first part of the policy so that it more clearly relates to the development management process. I also recommend the deletion of the second part of the policy as it describes a process (explaining how development proposals comply with the policy) rather than being a policy in its own right. However, to safeguard the importance of the issues as raised by NMPC I recommend that the matter is incorporated into an expanded supporting text.

**In the first part of the policy replace ‘The following criteria apply:’ with ‘Development proposals should demonstrate the way in which they address the following matters’**

**Delete the second part of the policy**

*At the end of paragraph 7.20 add: ‘Policy E2 sets out how this will be achieved. The Design and Access Statement or Heritage Statement of planning applications should explain the way in which the proposal concerned will address the criteria in the policy.’*

Policy E3 Local Heritage Assets

- 7.23 This policy celebrates the importance of local heritage assets in the parish. It identifies four assets:
- Schorne Well;
  - The Parish Barn and Associated Land;
  - Garfield House; and
  - The Old Post Office.

- 7.24 I looked at the buildings concerned during the visit. I am satisfied that the heritage assets identified are appropriate. They are important and significant buildings in their own rights.
- 7.25 The policy has been submitted in the context that BC may wish to include these and other buildings in its own Local Heritage List. This process will add further to the integrity of the approach which NMPC has undertaken. Nevertheless, it is outside the control of NMPC. In the event that BC identifies additional buildings in its own list of assets NMPC could then consider incorporating the additional assets within any full or partial review of the Plan in due course.
- 7.26 I recommend that the order of the policy is reversed so that the assets are identified initially and then followed by the policy implications. I also recommend that the details about each of the local heritage assets are repositioned into the supporting text.
- 7.27 Finally I recommend that the policy element is modified so that it has regard to national policy. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF comments about the relationship which needs to be struck between any harm caused by a development proposal on a non-designated heritage assets and the significance of the asset. As submitted, the policy approach is both onerous and prescriptive. The recommended modification ensures that the policy has regard to national policy.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘The Plan identifies the following Local Heritage Assets:**

**[List the assets without the descriptions]**

**The effect of an application on the significance of an identified local heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect a local heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset concerned.’**

*At the end of paragraph 7.22 add: ‘The details of the four identified local heritage assets are as follows:*

*[Insert the names of the assets and their descriptions as submitted in the policy]*

Policy E4 Field Patterns and archaeology

- 7.28 This policy addresses the importance of safeguarding archaeological remains as development proceeds. It has a specific focus on the protection of the ridge and furrow field network in the parish as identified on Policy Map 4.
- 7.29 As submitted the policy is slightly unclear. It comments both about general archaeological matters and then includes a specific element about identified ridge and furrow fields in the parish.
- 7.30 I recommend the deletion of the general part of the policy. It brings no added value beyond national and local planning policies.



- 7.31 In contrast, the element of the policy in relation to ridge and furrow fields in the parish is underpinned by detailed local work and research. I recommend that this element of the policy is modified so that it more clearly relates to the development management process. I also recommend that the policy explicitly identifies the implications of development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the ridge and furrow landscape. In this context the policy will have regard to Section 16 of the NPPF.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Development proposals within and adjacent to the ridge and furrow landscape as shown on Policy Map 4 at Annex 1 should take account of its significance within the local environment and its archaeological significance.’**

**Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the archaeological significance of the identified ridge and furrow landscape will not be supported.’**

Policy NE1 Protecting the landscape

- 7.32 This policy looks to ensure that new development respects the natural landscape. It makes specific mention of field ponds, field boundaries, trees and hedgerows. It also comments that such features should be incorporated into landscaping schemes associated with new development.
- 7.33 The policy takes a positive approach to this important matter in the parish. I recommend a series of modification to ensure that the policy meets the basic conditions. In doing so the policy will also have the ability to be more clearly applied through the development management process. The modifications will also ensure that the policy can be applied on a proportionate basis. Plainly not all proposals will have a direct impact on the natural environment.
- 7.34 I recommend that the element of the policy about ongoing maintenance of natural landscape features being incorporated into any landscape design schemes is relocated from the policy into the supporting text. Whilst it is related to the land use planning process it is not policy in its own right.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should protect and where practicable enhance the natural landscape and local character of the Parish, including field ponds, mature, veteran, and notable trees and hedgerows, and existing field patterns. Where appropriate, protected natural landscape features should be incorporated into any landscape design schemes.’**

*At the end of paragraph 8.7 add: ‘Policy NE1 advises that where appropriate, protected natural landscape features should be incorporated into any landscape design schemes. In these circumstances, the developer should seek to ensure that proportionate arrangements are put in place to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the natural environment which would be so affected.’*

### Policy NE2 Biodiversity

- 7.35 This policy sets out the Plan's approach towards biodiversity. It makes specific reference to the need for a 10% net gain in biodiversity.
- 7.36 There is a specific element in the policy about black poplars. The policy also offers support for wildlife corridors and the connection of sustainable drainage solutions into wider environmental initiatives.
- 7.37 The policy takes a very positive approach to this important matter. In general terms it meets the basic conditions. Nevertheless, in this wider context I recommend the following series of modifications to ensure that it has the clarity required by the NPPF:
- the subdivision of the first element of the policy into two separate but related matters;
  - wording to ensure that the policy can be applied proportionately; and
  - wording to acknowledge that the enhancement of natural features will not always be practicable.

#### **Replace the policy with:**

**'New development should protect and where practicable enhance existing natural features of within and adjacent to application sites and provide at least 10% measurable net gain in biodiversity.'**

**As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should make provision of appropriate species-related measures, such as swift, martin, and bat bricks, and the incorporation of native species into landscaping schemes.**

**Development proposals should retain black poplars wherever practicable. Where black poplar trees need to be removed, each tree lost should be replaced by two new black poplar trees of an appropriate size and age planted in a suitable location.**

**Development proposals should respond positively to opportunities to enhance and restore wildlife corridors and to link sustainable drainage solutions in new developments to complement wider nature conservation objectives.'**

### Policy SD1 Development within the Settlement Boundary

- 7.38 This policy identifies a settlement boundary within which new development will be focused. It then sets out support for development proposals (including housing) within the identified boundary. It also provides a policy approach towards development proposals on the edge of the identified boundary. The policy also sets out a series of criteria with which proposed development should comply.
- 7.39 The policy takes an appropriate approach to this matter. Its effect will be to focus new development close to existing built facilities and in sustainable locations. By definition it will assist in safeguarding the countryside.

- 7.40 In coming to this conclusion, I have given careful consideration to the representation made by Mary Tuckett. I am satisfied that the settlement boundary as proposed in the submitted Plan is fit for purpose.
- 7.41 I recommend a series of modifications to the policy so that it meets the basic conditions. They include:
- making a direct reference in the policy to the defined settlement boundary on Policy Map 5;
  - clarifying the exceptional circumstances element of the policy for development adjacent to the identified settlement boundary;
  - deleting the element of the policy on community buildings adjacent to the settlement boundary which seeks to ensure that they are viable in the longer terms. Whilst this ambition is laudable, the demand for and nature of community facilities is likely to change in the Plan period. As such such ongoing viability is neither deliverable nor enforceable;
  - deleting the element of the policy on community buildings adjacent to the settlement boundary which requires community support for such proposals (including support from NMPC). Whilst such support would be appropriate, it will be for BC to consider all material planning considerations that affect development proposals;
  - a refinement of some of the amenity criteria in the third part of the policy so that they can be applied consistently through the development management process; and
  - the deletion of the final part of the policy given that it largely restates elements of other policies in the Plan.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘The Plan identifies a Settlement Boundary as shown on Policy Map 5. Development proposals on infill or redevelopment sites inside the Settlement Boundary will be supported where they comply with other policies in the Plan.**

**In exceptional circumstances, non-residential development proposals will be supported on sites adjacent to the Settlement Boundary where all the following criteria are met:**

- **the development responds to an identified community need;**
- **the scale of development is proportionate to serve local needs or to support local facilities;**
- **the development contributes positively to the character of the settlement and is appropriate to its structure, form, character, and size; and**
- **in situations where a community building is being proposed, the users of the proposed development can safely travel to and from it by sustainable modes of transport.**

**Development proposals should not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties by way of:**

- a loss of privacy;
- the overshadowing of existing properties caused by proposed building;
- the overbearing effect of a proposed building or structure;
- the loss of car parking unless mitigated as part of the proposal;
- the excessive loss of mature vegetation or landscaping; and
- additional traffic resulting from the development.’

#### Policy SD2 New Housing Development

- 7.42 This policy sets out the Plan’s expectations for a range of house sizes to come forward on new housing developments. It comments that for developments of more than two houses that the higher percentage should be for smaller homes (1 or 2 bedrooms).
- 7.43 I am satisfied that the policy is underpinned by relevant information and that it will address a series of social and affordability issues.
- 7.44 I recommend that the policy is modified to remove any references to the cost of the homes delivered or to the social groups who might benefit from the construction of smaller houses. As the properties will be privately constructed and sold neither of these matters are directly within the control of the planning system. Nevertheless, I recommend that the matter is addressed in extended supporting text.

#### Replace the policy with:

**‘Development proposals for three or more homes should include a mix of house sizes and with a larger proportion of one- or two-bedroom homes.’**

*At the end of paragraph 10.17 add: ‘Policy SD2 sets out the Plan’s approach towards the delivery of smaller houses. Development proposals to provide homes of a scale and nature for younger people and older people wishing to downsize will be particularly supported.’*

#### Policy SD3 High Quality Development

- 7.45 This policy sets out the Plan’s expectations for high quality development. In doing so it identifies a series of distinctive design principles.
- 7.46 The policy makes a direct connection to the North Marston Design Code. The Code is an excellent document in its own right. In a broader sense, it is a first-class local response to the national design agenda as set out in Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 7.47 I recommend modifications to the wording of some of the design principles. In general terms they will ensure that the policy will be more closely aligned to the development management process. In some cases, they replace the word ‘encouraged’. Whilst I can understand the approach taken the word has little effect in a policy context.
- 7.48 BC suggests that the Design Code should be incorporated into the Plan as an appendix. I recommend a modification to this effect. As submitted the Code is one of the submission documents. It has the ability to become separated from the Plan once it is made. Plainly this will be a matter of document management. Nevertheless, the Design Code will need to be associated with the wider Plan for this policy to be capable

of application within the Plan period. In this context, its identification as an appendix will be the best way to achieve this objective.

**In the second part of the policy replace ‘All new development must:’ with ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should’**

**Replace the first principle with: ‘have regard to the guidelines and design principles set out in the North Marston Design Code’**

**In the fourth principle replace ‘respond’ with ‘respond positively’**

**In the fifth principle replace the two uses of ‘possible’ with ‘practicable’**

**Replace the sixth principle with: ‘use high-quality materials appropriate to the development’s context and character’ with ‘a concentration on locally sourced or salvaged materials wherever practicable’.**

**Replace the seventh principle with: ‘be of a design with a locally-inspired character incorporating innovative and creative features appropriate to the site as identified within the parameters of the guidelines of the North Marston Design Code. In this broader context the use superior environmental performance techniques will also be supported.’**

**In the eighth principle delete ‘to ensure that surrounding dwellings are not overshadowed.’**

**Replace the final principle with: ‘integrate car parking within the hard and soft landscaping on the development site.’**

*Incorporate the Design Code as an appendix of the Plan. This could be achieved either by the incorporation of the full Design Code or a short description of its role and nature, details of its contents with hyperlinks to the component elements.*

#### Policy SD4 Energy Efficient Buildings

- 7.49 This policy takes a positive approach towards energy-efficient buildings. It has three related parts. The first sets out a general expectation that new development should be to a high level of sustainable construction and design. The second sets out specific design features for new buildings. The third comments about alterations to existing buildings and key principles for energy efficiency.
- 7.50 The policy takes a positive and non-prescriptive approach to this important matter. I recommend a series of detailed modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Whilst they do not change the overall approach taken, they will allow the policy to be applied consistently through the development management process.

**In the second part of the policy replace:**

- **‘All new development’ with ‘All new build’**
- **‘This involves’ with ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should positively address the following matters:’**

**Replace the third part of the policy with:**

**‘Proposals for the retrofit of existing buildings, including heritage assets, to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy will be supported where such works retain the character and integrity of the building concerned.**

**Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for alterations to existing buildings should be designed to achieve sustainable design and construction standards.’**

Policy SD5 Water Management

7.51 This policy takes a comprehensive approach to water management. It includes four related components as follows:

- proposals for development must incorporate a sustainable and integrated approach to the management of flood risk, surface water (including run off) and foul drainage.
- all development involving the loss of permeable surfaces, loss of trees, loss of soft landscaping, or loss of any other feature that reduces flood risk should use appropriate mitigation measures to prevent an increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere.
- new developments must incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- all developments must be designed by taking into account best practice in water efficiency, such as water efficient fittings and appliances, water harvesting, grey water recycling, and storage features

7.52 The approach taken has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.

7.53 As submitted, the policy would apply in a universal way. In these circumstances, many of its elements would not directly be relevant to the minor and domestic applications which will continue to represent the majority of development proposals which come forward in the parish. I recommend that the policy should apply in a proportionate way to take account of the scale and nature of proposals. NMPC agreed to this approach in its response to the clarification note. I have recommended an additional opening element of the policy to address this matter from which the four related parts in the submitted policy would stem.

7.54 I also recommend detailed modifications to the wording of the second and third principles so that they can be applied consistently through the development management process. The modifications also remove unnecessary explanatory text from the policy.

**At the beginning of the policy add: ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should respond positively to the following principles:’**

**Replace the opening wording of the four principles (the submitted parts of the policy) as follows:**

- **‘Proposals for development must’ with ‘Development proposals should’**
- **‘All development involving’ with ‘Development proposals which would involve’**
- **‘New developments must’ with ‘Development proposals should’**
- **‘All developments must’ with ‘Development proposals should’**

**In the second principle replace ‘is required’ with ‘should’ and then delete the second sentence.**

**In the third principle replace ‘to reduce the runoff of surface water in line with the requirements of Buckinghamshire Council’ with ‘wherever practicable’**

#### Policy C1 Community Facilities

- 7.55 This policy celebrates the importance of community facilities in the parish. It has two related parts. The first looks to safeguard a series of identified facilities. The second offers support to the development/promotion of new facilities
- 7.56 The policy identifies the following community facilities:
- The Pilgrim Public House;
  - The Wesley Centre;
  - The Memorial Hall;
  - The Village Shop; and
  - The Clubhouse at the Sports Field
- 7.57 In general terms the policy takes an appropriate approach. The identified facilities are clear and obvious in the village.
- 7.58 I recommend that the order of the policy is reconfigured and that some of its elements are combined. This will better reflect the type of decisions which BC may need to take within the Plan period. The recommended modifications also address two related matters. The first is that the element of the policy which relates to proposals for alterations and adaptations to existing identified commercial facilities cannot directly relate to the viability of the facility itself. Plainly the viability of any facility may change over time and any such proposals will need to be considered on their physical merits. The second is that the element of the policy about new community facilities needs to be a self-contained matter. Any such applications would need to be determined on their merits without an assessment of the impact which they would or would not have on existing community facilities. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will do much to contribute towards the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development in the parish.



Replace the policy with:

**‘The Plan identifies the following key community facilities:**

- **The Pilgrim Public House**
- **The Wesley Centre**
- **The Memorial Hall**
- **The Village Shop**
- **The Clubhouse at the Sports Field**

**Development proposals for the change of use to a use other than for community facilities, or the demolition/the conversion of a key community facility will not be supported unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the facility’s continued use is no longer commercially viable and there is evidence that the property has been actively marketed, commensurate with its use, and at a commercial value on the open market, for a period of at least 12 months.**

**Proposals to improve a key community facility by way of the extension or partial replacement or redevelopment of buildings, structures, and land, will be supported, where the design of the scheme respects the character of the village, is appropriate in design terms and will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of adjoining residential properties.**

**The provision of new community facilities which are proportionate both in scale and use to the Parish will be supported.’**

Policy C2 Local Green Spaces

- 7.59 This policy proposes the designation of a series of local green spaces (LGSs). They are shown on Policies Map 6. The proposed LGSs reflect the character and the nature of the village.
- 7.60 The supporting text comments about the tests in the NPPF for the designation of LGSs. Annex 2 provides detailed commentary on the way in which NMPC considers that the various proposed LGSs meet the criteria for such designation in the NPPF. I looked carefully at the proposed LGSs when I visited the neighbourhood area.
- 7.61 On the basis of all the information available to me, including my own observations, I am satisfied that the proposed LGS comfortably comply with the three tests in the paragraph 102 of the NPPF and meet the basic conditions. In several cases they are precisely the types of green spaces which the authors of the NPPF would have had in mind in preparing national policy. The High Street Greens and the Sports Field are particularly good examples of informal and formal LGSs respectively.
- 7.62 In addition, I am satisfied that their proposed designation would accord with the more general elements of paragraph 101 of the NPPF. Firstly, I am satisfied that their designation is consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. They do not otherwise prevent sustainable development coming forward in the neighbourhood area and no such development has been promoted or suggested. Secondly, I am



satisfied that the LGSs are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period. Indeed, they are an established element of the local environment and, in most cases, have existed in their current format for many years. In addition, no evidence was brought forward during the examination that would suggest that the proposed local green spaces would not endure beyond the end of the Plan period.

- 7.63 The policy itself has two related parts. The first lists the proposed LGSs. The second sets out the implications for LGS designation. The second part seeks to follow the approach as set out in paragraph 103 of the NPPF. However, it goes beyond that approach in general terms and in commenting about the way in which the LGSs contribute to the special character of the parish.
- 7.64 Given the number and diversity of proposed LGSs I can understand the circumstances which have caused NMPC to design the policy in this way. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification so that the policy takes the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. The recommended modification also takes account of the case in the Court of Appeal on the designation of local green spaces and the policy relationship with areas designated as Green Belts (2020 EWCA Civ 1259).
- 7.65 In the event that development proposals affecting designated LGSs come forward within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by BC. In particular, BC will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy. I recommend that the supporting text clarifies this matter.

**Replace the second part of the policy with:**

**‘Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances’**

*At the end of paragraph 11.20 add: ‘Policy C2 follows the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green spaces within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by Buckinghamshire Council. In particular it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy’*

**Policy C3 Local Employment and Agriculture**

- 7.66 The policy comments that proposals for the development of new small businesses and for the expansion or diversification of existing businesses, including farm-based operations, will be encouraged. It also comments about proposals for working from home and for connections to Broadband.
- 7.67 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter. It will do much to encourage economic well-being and diversification.
- 7.68 I recommend a series of detailed modifications to ensure that the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF and can then be applied consistently through the development management process. The modifications include:

- a focus on the re-use of vacant or redundant historic buildings in their own right rather than as a hypothetical alternative to new build;
- an acknowledgement that not all proposals for working from home will need planning permission; and
- ensuring that the element of the policy on Broadband is clear and explicit in terms of its requirements for developers.

Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will assist significantly in delivering the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

**In the first part of the policy replace:**

- **‘Proposals for the development of’ with ‘Development proposals for’**
- **‘encouraged’ with ‘supported’**
- **‘adverse’ with ‘unacceptable’ (first bullet point)**
- **‘it would have an acceptable impact on’ with ‘they would respect’ (second bullet point)**
- **the third bullet point with: ‘where relevant they take opportunities to secure the re-use of vacant or redundant historic buildings as part of the development’**

**Replace the second and third parts of the policy with:**

**‘Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for extensions to or the part change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home working within the Settlement Boundary will be supported where appropriate vehicle parking is provided and where there is no unacceptable impact of the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.**

**New development should be provided with effective high speed broadband services. Appropriate measures for access to the existing North Marston fibre network should be incorporated into the design of proposed workplaces.’**

Policy TT1 Car Parking

7.69 This policy comments about a series of car parking related issues as follows:

- proposals for new housing developments will provide space for parking in line with VALP’s parking standards for all vehicles and have adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs, unless alternative and accessible parking arrangements can be made which do not add to on-street congestion.
- electric charging points for cars should be provided in every building in new developments.
- new development should not result in the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking.
- proposals for new development that provide additional off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion will be encouraged.

7.70 The approach taken in the policy is underpinned with helpful supporting text.

- 7.71 I recommend that the second part of the policy (on EV charging points) is replaced with one which makes reference to Policy T7 in the VALP. As submitted, the policy goes well beyond the approach taken in the development plan and without any specific evidence to justify such an approach. In any event, the matter of EV charging is increasingly being regulated by the Building Regulations.
- 7.72 The final part of the policy rather loosely provides encouragement for proposals which may provide additional car parking to alleviate on-street parking. Whilst BC may take such an approach on a case-by-case basis there is no evidence in the Plan about the types of sites to which this policy may apply. In these circumstances I recommend that this part of the policy is deleted. BC will be able to come to its own decision on any development proposals of this type which may come forward in the Plan period.
- 7.73 Finally I recommend a specific modification to the first part of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.

**In first part of the policy replace ‘will’ with ‘should’**

**Replace the second part of the policy with: ‘Electric charging points for care should be provided in line with Policy T7 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.’**

**Delete the fourth part of the policy.**

Policy TT2 Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse riders

- 7.74 This policy comments that development proposals that will increase traffic and/or affect rights of way should include measures that keep traffic speeds low and improve the provision of pavements and access for pedestrians and cyclists and horse riders. It also comments that where they are proposed, new roads, junctions, pavements and traffic management measures should be designed to complement the rural character of the village and reflect local heritage. The policy also comments about the retention and enhancement of the rights of way network.
- 7.75 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate approach to these matters and in a way which is distinctive to the rural nature of the parish.
- 7.76 Nevertheless, I recommend a series of modifications so that the policy can be applied consistently through the development management process. I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that it can be applied on a proportionate basis and to proposals which demonstrably increase traffic movements. I also recommend the deletion of any references to traffic speed as this is a highway rather than directly a planning matter. The recommended modifications to the second part of the policy are designed to allow its application through the development management system. As submitted, the policy reads more as a community action rather than as a land use policy.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals that would demonstrably increase traffic movement and/or affect rights of way should incorporate traffic management measures and improve the provision of**

**pavements and access for pedestrians and cyclists and horse riders. Any new roads, junctions, pavements and traffic management measures should be designed to complement the rural character of the village and reflect its local heritage.**

**Development proposals should respect the rights of way network. The development of new links within the village, to neighbouring villages and to the wider countryside will be supported.'**

#### Aspirations

7.77 Section 13 of the Plan includes a series of Aspirations. 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 required by national policy. They are presented under the following headings:

- Traffic and Transport;
- History and Heritage;
- Green Environment; and
- The North Marston Community.

7.78 I am satisfied that the Aspirations are both appropriate and distinctive to the parish. In some cases, they will complement the implementation of the land use policies.

#### Other Matters - General

7.79 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 NMPC 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

7.80 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.

7.81 I also recommend other modifications to the text of the Plan based on BC's comments insofar as they are necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. They relate to the more general parts of the Plan as follows:

*In paragraph 1.2 add '(as amended)' after '2012'*

*In paragraph 2.1 replace 'The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) version was published in July 2021 and sets out the Government's approach to sustainable development' with 'The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) sets out the Government's approach to sustainable development.'*

*In paragraph 3.6 replace 'Heritage England' with 'Historic England'*

*In paragraph 4.23 remove the e-mail address.*

*Within the first two objectives under Historic Environment, replace the words 'protect and conserve' with 'protect and enhance' In the third objective under Historic Environment, replace the word 'maintain and conserve' with 'maintain and enhance'*

*In paragraphs 7.8 and 7.21 amend the references/paragraph numbers to the NPPF to reflect the most recent version published In July 2021.*

*There are some inconsistencies with the hyperlinks. Some are highlighted as hyperlinks and some are not. All relevant matters should use hyperlinks.*

- 7.82 BC also raise a series of other matters (mainly relating to nature conservation and biodiversity matters 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 NMPC.

## 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 2035. 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 define a Settlement Boundary.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the North Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan 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 North Marston Neighbourhood Development Plan 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 May 2018.
- 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**  
**20 October 2022**