

Harston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2041

**A report to South Cambridgeshire District
Council on the Harston Neighbourhood
Development Plan**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by South Cambridgeshire District Council in February 2025 to carry out the independent examination of the Harston Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 12 March 2025. The examination was undertaken by written representations.
- 3 The Plan includes a range of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on safeguarding local character and ensuring that the Green Belt is respected. It identifies sites for residential development and proposes a package of local green spaces. The Plan has been prepared in short order.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been actively engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum area should coincide with the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
17 June 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Harston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2041 (the 'Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) by Harston Parish Council (HPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and its updates in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. 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 because 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 development plan. It has a clear focus on securing high quality design and safeguarding the relationship between the parish and the Green Belt.
- 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 SCDC, with the consent of HPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SCDC and HPC. I do not have any interest in 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. I have 42 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level and more recently as an independent examiner. I have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations. 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 proceeds 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 Sections 7 and 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. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan complies with the three requirements.

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 SCDC SEA/HRA Screening Determination Statement;
- the Environmental Report (August 2024);
- the supporting evidence for the Plan (as listed on SCDC's website);
- HPC's responses to the Clarification Note;
- the representations made to the Plan;
- the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan;
- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - December 2023 and December 2024;
- Planning Practice Guidance; and
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 12 March 2025. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. The visit is covered in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the available information, including the representations made to the submitted Plan, I was satisfied that the Plan could be examined by written representations.

The 2024 update of the NPPF

3.4 The NPPF was updated on 12 December 2024. Paragraph 239 of the NPPF 2024 sets out transitional arrangements for plan-making. It comments that the policies in the Framework will apply for the purpose of preparing neighbourhood plans from 12 March 2025 unless a neighbourhood plan proposal has been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on or before the 12 March 2025.

3.5 On this basis, the examination of the Plan against the basic condition that it should have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State is based on the 2023 version of the NPPF. Plainly the Plan was submitted in 2024 in that context. Where NPPF paragraph numbers are used in this report, they refer to those in the December 2023 version.

- 3.6 Paragraph 6.2 of this report sets out the full extent of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is examined.

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, HPC prepared a Consultation Statement. The Statement sets out the mechanisms that were used to engage the community and statutory bodies in the plan-making process. It also provides specific details about the consultation process that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (April to June 2024). It captures the key issues in a proportionate way and is underpinned by more detailed appendices.
- 4.3 The Statement is particularly helpful in the way in which it reproduces elements of the consultation documents used throughout the plan-making process. Their inclusion adds life and depth to the document.
- 4.4 The Statement sets out details of the comprehensive range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the initial stages of the Plan. They are arranged into the phases of the Plan as follows:
 - the inception stage (Section 3);
 - the January 2023 householder, business, and landowner engagement (Section 4);
 - the stakeholder engagement associated with technical work (Section 5); and
 - the pre-submission stage (Section 7).
- 4.5 I am satisfied that the engagement process was both proportionate and robust. In many instances, the ways in which HPC engaged the community and statutory bodies was extremely thorough and detailed.
- 4.6 Appendices 6 and 7 of the Statement provide details on the comments received on the pre-submission version of the Plan. Appendix 8 identifies the principal changes that worked their way through into the submission version. These details help to describe the evolution of the Plan.
- 4.7 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.

- 4.8 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. SCDC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Representations Received

- 4.9 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by SCDC that ended on 20 February 2025. This exercise generated comments from a range of organisations as follows:

- Forestry Commission
- Essex County Council
- Anglian Water Services Limited
- British Horse Society
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum
- Cambridgeshire Group of Ramblers
- Cambridge Past, Present, and Future
- Environment Agency
- Jesus College, Cambridge
- NHS Property Services
- Historic England
- East West Railway
- National Highways
- Natural England
- Sport England
- South Cambridgeshire District Council

- 4.10 Comments were also received from several people who live in the neighbourhood area.

- 4.11 I have taken account of all the representations received. Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to specific representations in my assessment of the policies in Section 7 of this report.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area consists of the parish of Harston. It lies five miles south of Cambridge, in the valley of the River Rhee, which forms its western boundary. The M11 forms part of its eastern boundary and then runs north of the parish, where it intersects with the A10 which runs north-south through the centre of the village. The influence of the A10 has resulted in a largely linear village with roads running off to the east and one to the west. The A10 provides links to Cambridge and the M11 motorway to the north, and Royston, Hertford, and London to the south. Its population in 2021 was 1,831 persons. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 17 June 2022.
- 5.2 Button End lies to the west of Harston village. It includes a scattering of houses and the Button End Industrial Estate.
- 5.2 As the Plan describes, the village is set within the Cambridge Green Belt and is surrounded largely by low lying arable farmland, with small scale pasture fields found on the village edge, and floodplain meadows along the Rhee in the west.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan covering the neighbourhood area is the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. It was adopted in 2018 and covers the period up to 2031. Policy S/6 (The Development Strategy) focuses new development on the edge of Cambridge, at new settlements and, in the rural areas at Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres.
- 5.5 Policy S/10 identifies a series of Group Villages, including Harston. The policy advises that residential development and redevelopment up to an indicative maximum scheme size of eight dwellings will be permitted within the development frameworks of Group Villages. The policy also advises that development may exceptionally consist of up to about 15 dwellings where this would make the best use of a single brownfield site. The development framework of Harston is shown on Inset Map 50 of the policies map.
- 5.6 In addition, the following policies in the Local Plan have been particularly important in influencing and underpinning the various policies in the submitted Plan:

Policy S/4 Green Belt
 Policy HQ/1 Design Principles
 Policy NH/14 Heritage Assets

Policy H/10 Affordable Housing
 Policy H/18 Working at Home
 Policy E/16 Expansion of Existing Businesses in the Countryside
 Policy E/19 Tourist Facilities and Visitor Attractions
 Policy SC/3 Protection of Village Services and Facilities
 Policy SC/4 Meeting Community Needs
 Policy SC/7 Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments
 Policy SC/8 Protection of Existing Recreation Areas

- 5.7 The submitted Plan has been prepared within its wider adopted development plan context. In doing so, it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents in the District. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.
- 5.8 It is also 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.

Unaccompanied Visit

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 12 March 2025. I approached along the A10 from the M11 to the north. This allowed me to understand its setting in the wider landscape and its proximity to the main road network.
- 5.10 I looked initially at the Harston Pavilion off The Limes. I saw its relationship with the well-maintained Recreation Ground and the adjacent Community Orchard.
- 5.11 I then looked at the potential development opportunities along the A10. I saw the land to the rear of 131 High Street and its relationship with the built development to the south. I then looked at the Telephone exchange site off Orchard Lane. I saw its relationship to the houses in Orchard Lane and to the Village Hall car park to the west.
- 5.12 I then walked along Station Road to the SIG Roofing site. I saw its relationship with the railway line to its south and east. I paid carefully attention to the height and massing of the buildings and to the relationship between the site and to built-up part of the village to the north.
- 5.13 I then drove to the Button End Industrial Estate. I noted its relationship with Harston and the scale and nature of the various commercial buildings.

5.14 Throughout the visit I looked carefully at the proposed local green spaces.

5.15 I left the parish along on the A10 and drove to Royston to the south. This highlighted the location of the parish between Cambridge and Royston.

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 considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented and informative document. It is also proportionate to the Plan itself.

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;
- not breach, and otherwise be compatible with, the assimilated obligations of EU legislation (as consolidated in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023; and
- not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

6.3 I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings.

National Planning Policies and Guidance

6.4 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 (NPPF) issued in December 2023. This approach is reflected in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

6.5 The NPPF sets out a range of core land-use planning issues to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are relevant to the Harston Neighbourhood Plan:

- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan;
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
- 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.

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and ministerial statements.
- 6.8 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that subject to the recommended modifications in this report that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area within the context of its status within the development strategy in the Local Plan and the scale and nature of the Cambridge Green Belt. It proposes sites for residential development and designates a package of local green spaces. The Basic Conditions Statement maps the policies in the Plan against the appropriate sections of the NPPF.
- 6.9 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 is reinforced in Planning Practice. 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.
- 6.10 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. Most 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

- 6.11 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 (Policies HAR 27 and 28). In the social dimension, it includes policies on local green spaces (Policy HAR7), housing mix (Policy HAR15), the pavilion (Policy HAR23) and the school (Policy HAR24). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It includes policies on design (Policy HAR1), on heritage assets (Policy HAR4), and on landscape character (Policy HAR9). HPC has undertaken its own assessment of this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.12 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in South Cambridgeshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.13 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context. The Basic Conditions Statement helpfully relates the Plan's policies to policies in the development plan. Subject to the incorporation of 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

- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion was prepared by Place Services on behalf of SCDC for the Plan. It advises that the Plan proposes to allocate a site for approximately 6 dwellings and other uses (Policy HAR 28) thus allocating land for development purposes and therefore the Plan includes content that could give rise to significant negative effects on the environment, or any social or economic tenets of sustainability. It concludes that the Plan should be screened in for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

- 6.16 On this basis HPC commissioned an Environmental Report. It was published in August 2024. The report is thorough and comprehensive.
- 6.17 Chapter 6 of the report provides the detailed findings of the assessment of the four alternative spatial strategy options within Harston. A table provides a summary of the detailed assessment, distinguishing between the prediction of likely significant effects and the rankings of options in terms of how they perform against their relative sustainability merits.
- 6.18 The report makes the following conclusions:

‘Significant positive effects are concluded in relation to community wellbeing. The draft HNP seeks to deliver a small level of homes to meet local needs and specialist requirements, and supports accessible, cohesive, and inclusive communities.

Minor positive effects are predicted in relation to the climate change SEA topic, reflective of the draft HNP policies that support both climate change adaptation and mitigation. This includes delivering a low level of sustainable housing growth, setting requirements for high quality design and construction, and encouraging renewable energy provision and modal shift.

Minor positive effects are predicted in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, assuming recommendations are considered. This reflects the mitigation set out through policy for any adverse effects on biodiversity sites/ features, and support for BNG.

Minor positive effects are also predicted where the policy framework, supported by the village design codes and LCA, and local and national policy provisions, seeks to protect and enhance Harston’s rich historic environment. Similarly, minor positive effects are predicted in relation to landscape, reflective of the extensive policy framework dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the local landscape, village character and setting. The redevelopment of brownfield land and positive management of local water resources is also anticipated to lead to minor positive effects for the land, soil and water resources SEA theme.

Neutral effects are predicted in relation to transportation, as while policy provisions support local transport objectives, growth of the parish will inevitably increase road users and lead to a continued reliance on the private vehicle for travel.’

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.19 The screening report also undertook a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan. It is equally thorough on this matter. It advises as follows:

‘The Plan proposes to allocate a site for approximately 6 dwellings and other uses (Policy HAR 28) thus allocating land for development purposes and therefore the Harston Neighbourhood Plan includes content that could give rise to significant negative effects on the environment, or any social or economic tenets of sustainability. The HRA screening report indicates that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is predicted to have likely significant effects on screening concluded that likely significant effects on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site cannot be ruled out resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore screened in.’

- 6.20 On the basis of this conclusion HPC commissioned the preparation of a Habitats Regulations Assessment. It was published in February 2024. The report is thorough and comprehensive. It concludes that:

‘the Assessment considers the impacts arising from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. The HRA Screening stage identifies that, without mitigation, further consideration was required at the Appropriate Assessment stage to determine whether the Harston Neighbourhood Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, would adversely affect the integrity of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC as a result of impacts on protected species outside the protected sites potential impact pathway or Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site from recreational pressure in combination with other plans and projects.

Embedded mitigation measures for projects (planning applications) will need to be considered in project level HRA/AA reports assessed by South Cambridgeshire District Council and secured by a condition attached to any planning consent.

Subject to the above recommendation being incorporated and Natural England’s review, this HRA Screening and Appropriate Assessment report, indicates that, with mitigation embedded, the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the Habitats sites within scope, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.’

- 6.21 This approach provides assurance to all concerned that the submitted Plan takes appropriate account of important ecological and biodiversity matters.
- 6.22 Having reviewed all the relevant information I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of neighbourhood planning obligations.

Human Rights

- 6.23 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. In addition, 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. Based on all the evidence available to me, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Summary

- 6.24 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 HPC 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 three important elements. The first is the way in which several of the policies are directly underpinned by technical Appraisals. The second is its clear and attractive presentation. The structure of the Plan and its policies is very understandable and the use of colour and well-chosen photographs makes the document very attractive and user-friendly. The third is that the supporting text of each policy includes a policy context and rationale which explains its purpose.
- 7.5 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans should address the development and use of land. It also includes a series of Community Projects.
- 7.6 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan. The Community Projects are addressed thereafter. For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the Plan's policies.
- 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 is very well-organised and presented. It has been prepared with much attention to detail and local pride. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. 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 (Section 1) comments about the neighbourhood plan agenda in general, and identifies both the neighbourhood area (in Map 1) and the Plan

period (in paragraph 1.1). It comments about the purpose of the preparation of the Plan and how the community was engaged in its production.

- 7.10 Section 2 sets out the context within which the Plan was prepared. It comments about national policy, the adopted Local Plan, the emerging Local Plan and the impact of the delivery of the East West Rail route through the parish.
- 7.11 Section 3 provides information about the neighbourhood area. The interesting and comprehensive details help to set the scene for the policies.
- 7.12 Section 4 comments about seven key issues and a SWOT analysis of the parish.
- 7.13 Section 5 comments about the vision, themes, and objectives of the Plan. The Vision neatly summarises the ambition for the parish as follows:

‘To maintain the village’s rural charm, where new buildings are in keeping with the rural setting and its historic identity is retained. The environment, located in the green belt, will be enhanced for everyone to enjoy while embracing sustainability and biodiversity.’

A cohesive, diverse, vibrant community will be fostered, anchored by a thriving school, with improved community facilities & services to make it a great place to call home while being ecologically and environmentally friendly. Any new development should focus on creating affordable housing opportunities and be sensitively and sustainably designed. Improved connectivity will be created through well-designed transport options, with cycleways and footpaths that serve the needs of the community.’

- 7.14 The Vision is supported by eighteen objectives grouped around eight themes.
- 7.15 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 of this report.

Policy HAR 1 New development and design

- 7.16 The supporting text advises that the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal (HLCA) 2024 provides a useful overview of notable built and natural landmarks, open spaces, green infrastructure, and important village views within the settled areas. The HLCA identifies eight village character areas. The Plan advises that these areas differ slightly from the eight-character areas defined in the Harston Design Guidance and Codes (HDG&C) 2023, as several of the areas have been extended to include important open land close to the community that has historical, cultural, and natural elements that are found to contribute to the character of the built environment.

- 7.17 The policy comments that a design-led approach should be taken for all development proposals. It also advises that to be supported, development proposals must recognise and reinforce Harston's distinctive character and integrate well with the character area relevant to its location, as described in the HDG&C and the HLCA. The policy also includes a series of locally-distinctive design principles.
- 7.18 The policy takes a positive approach to design. It is helpfully underpinned by the HDG&C and the HLCA. Furthermore, the design principles are locally-distinctive. In the round, the policy and its supporting documents are an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. Within this broader context, I recommend two modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. The first refines the boundary treatment principle to reflect SCDC's representation and HPC's helpful responses. I also recommend the inclusion of details about what would constitute a tall fence (and which overlaps with national permitted development rights). The second is the deletion of the fifth part of the policy and its repositioning into the supporting text. This acknowledges that the amenity issues raised are either explanatory comments or are separately addressed in the Local Plan.
- 7.19 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the Boundary Treatment principle with: 'New boundary treatment should respond positively to the prevailing character of the street and character area within which a development proposal is located as set out in the Design Guidance and Code (LD03.2 Boundary Treatment). Wherever practicable, boundary treatments should primarily consist of hedgerows. Boundary treatments that would undermine the rural character of the village, or would otherwise be inappropriate or unsympathetic to the street scene will not be supported. This includes brick walls and fencing above one metre in height fronting directly on to the street, unless such structures can be demonstrated not to be harmful to the public realm and respond sensitively to the context of the site concerned.'

Delete the fifth part of the policy.

At the end of paragraph 6.8 add: 'It has been developed to complement the approach taken in Policies HQ/1 and SC/10 of the Local Plan. [Thereafter insert the deleted fifth part of the policy]

Policy HAR 2 Protecting and enhancing important landscape features within the built-up environment

- 7.20 The supporting text comments that the policy is focused on recognising, protecting, and enhancing important landscape features within and around the built-up areas of the village. It also advises that Policy HAR 3 focuses on protecting and enhancing Harston's landscape character and setting more widely (view, village gateways and settlement fringe areas) and Policy HAR 9 addresses landscape character in the wider parish. This helps to set a context for the ways in which the various policies will be applied.
- 7.21 The policy takes a positive approach to important landscape features in the parish and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. In this context I recommend a series of modifications to the supporting text as suggested by SCDC and agreed by HPC in its response to the clarification note. Whilst they do not change the overall direction of the policy, they will bring the clarity required by the NPPF.
- 7.22 The second part of the policy comments that landscaping schemes should be provided at the outset of a development. Whilst this may be desirable and will provide the maximum period for planting to become established (and where necessary to be replaced as construction is taking place), in many cases such an approach may be impracticable or potentially counterproductive. On this basis I recommend that the approach is modified to one which, wherever practicable, ensures that landscaping schemes are delivered throughout the construction period.
- 7.23 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace 'Map 2' with 'Map 5'

In the first part of the policy replace the third bullet point in the first part of the policy with: 'Existing grass verges where they contribute positively to the pedestrian environment or local landscape character.'

Replace the opening element of the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals involving new build, including householder extensions, should submit a Landscape Compliance Statement which demonstrates how they will retain or improve existing landscaping on a site. Wherever practicable, landscaping schemes should be delivered throughout the construction of the development. The following considerations apply:'

At the end of paragraph 6.20 add: 'These various issues are captured in Policy HAR 2. Its third part requires an applicant to make provision for future maintenance of a landscaping scheme. To implement this part of the policy, planning conditions are likely to be attached to development consents and applicants are likely to be requested to submit a Maintenance and Management Plan. Landscape issues are also addressed in Policies HAR3 and 7.'

Policy HAR 3 Protecting and enhancing landscape character and setting in and around Harston village

- 7.24 The supporting text advises that the context to this policy is that the preservation or enhancement of locally important views within the settlement and looking out from the settlement, and the preservation or enhancement of the character of Harston's village gateways is an important part of preserving Harston's unique landscape and settlement character.
- 7.25 This is a good policy which is underpinned by the Landscape Character Appraisal. In general, it takes a positive approach and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 7.26 I have noted SCDC's comments about the selection of the views and how they inform the policy, and HPC's extensive response to the clarification note. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the HLCA provides sufficiently robust evidence to underpin a policy of this type.
- 7.27 Within this broader context I recommend that the various elements of the policy are recast to ensure that the wider policy has a proportionate element (part 1), identifies which views are locally-valued views (part 2), and that the requirements of the policy are applied where it is practicable and reasonable to do so (the remainder of the policy).
- 7.28 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

'As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals coming forward either in Harston village or within its settlement fringes (see Map 8 for settlement fringe areas) should be sensitive to Harston's distinctive landscape and settlement character, as described in detail in the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024, (HLCA 2024).'

Development proposals should respect and not adversely impact on the key features of Harston's locally important village views within and from the settlement. The locally valued village views for the purpose of this policy are Views A, B, C/D, E, J and K (as shown on Map 6, and described in detail in Appendix 4).

Development proposals which fall within one of the views should take reasonable and practicable opportunities to enhance the view, having regard to its key features (as described in Appendix 4).

Development proposals which would impact on one of Harston's village gateways (as shown on Map 7) will only be supported if the sense of arrival and place at the relevant gateway is safeguarded and, where practicable, opportunities are taken to enhance the sense of arrival and place.

Development proposals in the identified settlement fringe areas (as defined on Map 8) should respond positively to their existing character and incorporate any practicable measures to mitigate and manage their landscape and visual impacts. In this regard, proposals should be guided by the findings of the Settlement Fringe Sensitivity Assessment in the HLCA 2024. Where opportunities arise, and where it is practicable to do so, development proposals should incorporate landscape enhancement measures.'

Policy HAR 4 Conserving and enhancing heritage assets

- 7.29 The context to the policy is that in addition to the listed buildings, there are other buildings, structures and open spaces that are of local historic importance and their preservation or enhancement is important to retaining or strengthening Harston's historic identity. These buildings and structures are referred to as non-designated heritage assets and are listed in the policy below. Many are in Harston's historic core.
- 7.30 The policy makes an appropriate distinction between designated and non-designated heritage assets and takes a positive approach towards conserving and enhancing heritage assets. In general terms, it has regard to Section 16 of the NPPF.
- 7.31 I looked at a selection of the proposed non-designated heritage assets during the visit. The reasoning for their identification was very clear. In addition, their selection is carefully underpinned by the details in Appendix 3. Nevertheless, I recommend that the way in which these assets are shown on maps is modified. This will allow for an easier cross referencing when viewing the list of non-designated heritage assets in the policy.

- 7.32 I recommend that the wording of the first part of the policy is refined to ensure that it properly expresses its intention of defining the non-designated heritage assets. I also recommend modifications to the third and fourth parts of the policy to remove the proposed commentary about the setting of non-designated heritage assets which does not feature in the NPPF. Finally, I recommend that the fifth part of the policy is deleted and relocated into the supporting text. This acknowledges that it comments about a process matter (consultation with the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record to establish the potential of a development sites to include artefacts of archaeological interest) rather than a land use planning policy.
- 7.33 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with: ‘The buildings and structures listed in this policy and described in more detail in Appendix 3 are identified as non-designated heritage assets.’

Replace the third part of the policy with: ‘When determining the impact of a development proposal on a designated heritage asset the impact on the setting of the heritage asset as well as the asset itself should be assessed.’

Replace the fourth part of the policy with: ‘Where development proposals would affect an identified non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be applied having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. To ensure this can happen, developers should prepare a statement (proportionate to the asset’s importance and so that the potential impact of the proposal can be understood) that describes the significance of the asset.’

Delete the fifth part of the policy.

At the end of paragraph 6.44 add the deleted final element of the policy

Include Map 24 (within Appendix 3), which shows the locations of the non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs), in the main body of the text alongside Policy HAR 4 in addition to its availability within Appendix 3.

Policy HAR 5 Preserving the special character of Harston’s historic core

- 7.34 This policy focuses on the historic core of Harston. The supporting text advises that both the HDG&C and the HLCA include an analysis of the historic core with the latter providing a more detailed description with a

stronger focus on landscape features. The historic core is referred to as the 'Old Core' in the HDG&C and as the Historic Core (CA2) in the HLCA.

- 7.35 I looked carefully at the historic core during the visit. I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Section 16 of the NPPF. Furthermore, it adds value to national and local planning policies.
- 7.36 I recommend modifications to the supporting text to incorporate HPC's responses to SCDC comments. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

At the end of paragraph 6.47 add: 'The Historic Core (CA2) is made up of CA2a and CA2b.'

At the end of paragraph 6.48 add: 'Character area 2b is made up of the old railway area including old Station House, the redeveloped goods yard – now SIG roofing/Tanner & Hall, and Tiptofts 1930s house developed in what was once Baggot Wood.'

Policy HAR 6 Button End

- 7.37 The supporting text advises that Button End is the name of the lane that transitions between the edge of Harston village and the open countryside. At its most northerly point, a well-used public right of way continues from the point at which the lane comes to an end. Button End is accessed off Church Street at the point at which it becomes Haslingfield Road. Button End is also the name given to the settled area, and although predominantly a low density rural residential area, including a small traveller community site, it includes an eclectic mix of horse pastures, stables, a farm, abandoned gravel pits, an industrial estate, and a few other businesses.
- 7.38 Policy HAR6 has been designed as a specific policy to add value to development plan policies. In general terms it does so in a positive way which seeks to balance Green Belt issues with the ongoing needs of business in the Button End Industrial Estate. Nonetheless I recommend specific modifications to the wording used in the second and third parts of the policy to reflect the role of a neighbourhood plan in the wider development plan
- 7.39 I understand the thinking behind the fifth part of the policy and experienced the road conditions in Button End first-hand. However, the wording of the policy may encourage development proposals which would conflict with Green Belt policy. I sought HPC's comments on this potential conflict. In its response to the clarification note it advised that:

'it is very important that the community's long-established aspiration to see an overall reduction of traffic (particularly HGVs) using Button End Lane is articulated clearly in the Plan. A part of this, is the inclusion of a policy statement that reflects this. It is not the intention of Plan to question or undermine the Green Belt status of the land 3.2 It is felt there are different clauses in the policy, and indeed in other policies, and indeed in the NPPF, that would prevent inappropriate uses from coming forward on this site.'

- 7.40 HPC also proposed an alternative form of wording. It has considerable merit, and I recommend accordingly. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the second and third parts of the policy replace 'must' with 'should'

Replace the fifth part of the policy with: 'Development proposals in Button End (including at Button End Industrial Estate) that would result in an overall reduction in traffic movements (and that are otherwise compliant with other development policies and with Green Belt policy), including that of lorries and HGVs along Button End will be supported.'

Policy HAR 7 Harston's Local Green Spaces

- 7.41 This policy proposes the designation of three local green spaces (LGS). The approach taken is underpinned by an assessment of the proposed LGSs against the criteria for such designations in the NPPF.
- 7.42 I looked at the proposed local green spaces carefully during the visit. The policy takes the matter-of-fact approach as set out in the NPPF. Based on all the evidence I am satisfied that the three proposed LGSs meet the criteria for such designation in paragraphs 105 and 106 of the NPPF.
- 7.43 I recommend that the wording in the second part of the policy is modified so that it better reflects the approach taken in paragraph 107 of the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals on these sites should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts'

Policy HAR 8 Improving open space provision in Harston

- 7.44 The supporting text comments that the policy identifies Harston specific priorities with respect to future open space provision. It also comments that it is not the intention of this policy to undermine the delivery of necessary on-site infrastructure needs that are created by schemes, such as on-site play

and open space provision. The second part of the policy safeguards land at Harston Gravel Pits for future informal open space provision to serve local community needs.

- 7.45 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to open space provision in the parish and has regard to Sections 8, 12 and 15 of the NPPF. I note the comments from SCDC and HPC's response in the clarification note. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the second part of the policy meets the basic conditions.
- 7.46 In the round, the overall policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy HAR 9 Protecting and enhancing Harston's wide landscape character

- 7.47 The supporting text advises that the HLCA draws on landscape character types and landscape character areas defined in existing work (the National Character Areas defined by Natural England, and the character area types defined in the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2021) and identifies three distinct landscape character areas in Harston.
- 7.48 The supporting text also comments that the preservation and enhancement of Harston's village landscape and settlement character is largely addressed through Policy HAR 3 of the Plan. Nevertheless, it advises that development can also occur beyond the village and beyond the village edges and it is recognised that landscape in the wider parish is also sensitive to development. This particularly applies to the chalk ridge areas.
- 7.49 In general terms the policy takes a very positive approach to landscape character and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. The first and the second parts of the policy comment that development proposals that come forward in Harston's wider landscape must be sensitive to its distinctive character as described in the HLCA. The second part of the policy comments about the way in which this approach translates into each of Harston's landscape character areas. This approach is a major achievement of the Plan.
- 7.50 I sought HPC's comments on the added value provided by the remainder of the policy given that views are addressed in Policy HAR3. In its helpful response to the clarification note it advised that:

'The village views and landscape views are dealt with in separate policies intentionally. They deal with different characteristics. The village views have close association with the settlement. In the main, they are connected to small ancient enclosure fields with historic boundaries close to the village (identified as important open land) so although they make up the Green Belt it is how

they make it up e.g. small ancient fields with hedgerow boundaries that enclose views that give it its importance/character as opposed to large wide open arable fields. To avoid confusion with regards the views, we suggest the policies are amended so that the specific views dealt with in each policy are listed. To be clear, the village views dealt with in Policy HAR 3 are A,B,C/D,E,J,K and the wide landscape views, dealt with in Policy HAR 9 are F,G,H,L,M,N and P.'

- 7.51 This suggest approach has significant merit and I recommend accordingly. This recommended modification also corresponds with the associated recommended modification to Policy HAR3 addressed earlier in this report. I also recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in the third and fourth parts of the policy, and that the fourth part of the policy acknowledges that opportunities to enhance the landscape features found within an identified view will not always be reasonable and practicable. In this overall context I also recommend the deletion of View Q given that it affects land outside the neighbourhood area.
- 7.52 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the third part of the policy with: 'Development proposals should respect and not adversely impact on Harston's wider landscape views (Views F, G, H, L, M, N and P) as shown on Map 6, and described in detail in Appendix 4.'

Replace the fourth part of the policy with: 'Development proposals which fall within one of the views should take any reasonable and practicable opportunities to enhance the landscape features found within the view (as described in Appendix 4).'

Policy HAR 10 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Harston Parish

- 7.53 This is a detailed policy on biodiversity and ecological resources. It is underpinned by equally-detailed supporting text. It also addresses biodiversity net gain.
- 7.54 The policy addresses these various issues in a very positive way and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. In this broader context I recommend the following modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow SCDC to implement its contents through the development management process:

- detailed changes to the wording used throughout the policy to acknowledge the role played by a neighbourhood plan within the overall development plan;
- a recasting of the first part of the policy to remove references to the national hierarchy of mitigation;
- the deletion of the second part of the policy and its relocation into the supporting text. This acknowledges that it is supporting text and restates the national energy hierarchy; and
- a recasting of the fifth part of the policy so that it more fully expresses its intentions and ambition.

7.55 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with:

Development proposals that either directly or indirectly impact a site of biodiversity value in the neighbourhood plan area (as shown on Maps 13 and 14) should respond positively to their biodiversity value. Depending on the scale of the proposal and the sensitivity of the site concerned, a long-term management plan may be required as part of the proposal.

Delete the second part of the policy.

Replace the fifth part of the policy with:

‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should seek available opportunities to create or strengthen links between existing and/or new habitats through the development site. In this context, the following parts of the neighbourhood area provide opportunities to strengthen or enhance nature networks or ecological links:

- **River Cam corridor, including adjacent woodland and water meadows.**
- **Hoffer Brook in southern part of the parish – as shown on Map 14.**
- **Floodplain fields in northern part of the parish – as shown on Map 14.’**

As a new paragraph after paragraph 8.16 add: ‘Policy HAR10 addresses these various matters. [Thereafter insert the deleted second part of the policy].’

Policy HAR 11 Delivering sustainable design and construction in Harston

- 7.56 The supporting text explains that the context to the policy is that the UK has a legally binding requirement to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. Part of the challenge in achieving net zero carbon status is to address how homes and buildings are designed and constructed.
- 7.57 The policy and the supporting text are comprehensive. The initial part of the policy sets the scene for the remainder and advises that all development proposals will be expected to embed the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation in line with national and Local Plan policy. It also advises that this means adopting design and construction approaches that deliver low or zero carbon homes and buildings that demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels, for example through construction to the Passivhaus standard or through applying the Net Zero Carbon Homes toolkit.
- 7.58 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to these matters and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF. In this broader context, I recommend that the opening element of the policy is modified so that it takes a proportionate approach. This will acknowledge that minor and domestic proposals will not necessarily affect each of the elements of the policy. I also recommend the deletion of specific measures in the first part of the policy to ensure that it has regard to the Written Ministerial Statement Planning: Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update 2023. The various measures are already highlighted in the supporting text.
- 7.59 I also recommend modification to the wording of the opening element of the second part of the policy. They reflect the role of a neighbourhood plan in the wider development plan and extend the proportionate approach to the provision of a Sustainability Statement. Finally, I recommend that part 2d of the policy is recast so that has the format and structure of a land use planning policy.
- 7.60 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with:

‘As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should embed the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation in line with national and Local Plan policy. This means adopting design and construction approaches that deliver low or zero carbon homes and buildings that demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels.’

In the opening element of the second part of the policy replace ‘must’ with ‘should’ and ‘(including new dwellings and householder extensions that require planning permission)’ with ‘(excluding householder extensions that require planning permission)’

Replace part 2d of the policy with:

‘Uses appropriate building materials. The restoration and renovation of existing buildings should be prioritised over new build. Where new build is involved, materials should be prioritised which are reused, reclaimed or natural from the local area or from sustainable sources and that are durable. The materials should reflect and integrate well with those found within the site surroundings and character area.’

Policy HAR 12 Supporting renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in Harston parish

7.61 The supporting text comments that the Plan supports standalone renewable energy infrastructure, particularly where such schemes are community-led. Paragraph 9.29 sets out a series of examples of such technology which are achievable and deliverable.

7.62 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF. I sought comments from HPC about the need for the reference in the first part of the policy to the delivery of community benefits necessary given the broader benefits of low-carbon development proposals. In its response to the clarification note, it advised that:

‘paragraph 168 b) in the NPPF 2024 states that local planning authorities should recognise that small scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Many community-led projects are community-led because they deliver tangible benefits to the community in addition to lowering carbon demand. The scenarios set out in supporting paragraph 9.29 (in the submission Harston NP) include examples (see A, B, C and E) where this is the case.....in light of paragraph 168 b) in the NPPF 2024, the wording in Policy HAR 12 is very appropriate and should remain.’

7.63 On the balance of the evidence I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate approach to this matter. In addition, as worded, it does not prevent more general renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure proposals being supported which may not have the community benefits as set out in the policy.

- 7.64 I have noted SCDC comments about the second part of the policy. However, I am satisfied that it is appropriate for HPC to offer specific support to proposals which are community-led. Nonetheless I recommend a modification to the wording used in the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. I also recommend the deletion of the unnecessary use of 'in principle' in the first part of the policy. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the opening element of the first part of the policy delete 'in principle'

In the second part of the policy replace 'are particularly supported.' with 'will be particularly supported.'

Policy HAR 13 Managing flood risk in Harston

- 7.65 The supporting text explains that the policy focuses on artesian wells and ensuring that the drainage infrastructure that is necessary to avoid future flood events from these wells is either protected or improved when applicable development proposals come forward. In this context, the policy address artesian well, ditches and suggests the uses of sustainable drainage schemes.
- 7.66 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to these matters and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF. In this broader context, I recommend the following modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to ensure that SCDC can apply its provisions in a practicable way through the development management process:
- a simplification of the second part of the policy (on ditches) to acknowledge that ownership issues are not material planning considerations;
 - a recasting of the third part of the policy so that it sets out specific requirements for development proposals rather than commenting more generally about the way in which the use of sustainable drainage systems is incorporated in national policy;
 - the creation of an additional part of the policy to set out the implications for development proposals which cannot otherwise meet the requirements of the policy; and
 - an update to the supporting text about ongoing work being undertaken locally by the Environment Agency
- 7.67 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the second part of the policy with: ‘Development proposals on sites that contain ditches should ensure that access is provided/remains in place to allow appropriate future maintenance.’

Replace the third part of the policy with: ‘Development proposals should incorporate appropriate surface water drainage arrangements. Wherever practicable and appropriate to the site concerned, Sustainable drainage systems should be used especially above-ground open SuDs such as attenuation ponds and swales that provide water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits, and interception source control such as rain gardens, bioretention green roofs and permeable paving.’

Add a fourth part of the policy to read: ‘Proposals that result in an increased risk of surface or groundwater flooding will not be supported.’

At the end of paragraph 9.33 add: ‘The Environment Agency is undertaking a project to update its national flood risk information for flooding and coastal erosion, and a new flood map for planning (NaFRA2) was published in March 2025.’

Policy HAR 14 Supporting rural exception sites to meet Harston’s affordable housing needs

- 7.68 The supporting text advises that the Plan supports means by which affordable housing to meet Harston specific needs can be delivered though bringing forward a rural exceptions housing scheme. The policy requires that the affordable housing brought forward as part of a rural exception site remains affordable in perpetuity and is offered on a preferential basis to people with a strong local connection to the parish.
- 7.69 The policy takes a positive approach to this issue and has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF. In this context I recommend a modification to the wording used in the first part of the policy so that it is consistent with that used in national and local policy. I also recommend that the wording of the opening element of the second part of the policy is clarified so that it more properly expresses its intentions. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘small-scale’ with ‘small site’

Replace the opening element of the second part of the policy with: ‘In exceptional circumstances, the inclusion of a small number of market homes within an affordable housing scheme will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:’

Policy HAR 15 Housing mix, including First Homes, in Harston

- 7.70 The supporting text advises that Harston's housing stock is dominated by larger detached and semi-detached homes (86% of stock), and that recent completions have skewed the balance further towards larger homes. The resulting policy is comprehensive and seeks to address housing mix and affordability in the parish. It is underpinned by similarly-comprehensive supporting text.
- 7.71 The policy advises that development proposals that create one or more new dwellings should prioritise the delivery of homes with one, two or three bedrooms, over larger homes (with four or more bedrooms), unless an alternative dwelling size, type and mix can be justified through reference to up-to-date evidence on parish housing stock and local needs or to local site-specific circumstances. It also sets out an anticipated mix of housing for larger developments.
- 7.72 I am satisfied that the first part of the policy takes an appropriate and balanced approach. The second part of the policy acknowledges that small schemes may struggle to meet the mathematical requirements of the policy. In this context I sought advice from HPC about the meaning of 'schemes large enough to include a mix in terms of size and/or tenure'. In its response to the clarification note it advised that:
- 'A scheme of five or more dwellings is considered capable of including a mix of sizes and affordable housing will only be required on schemes of 10 or more. To address the issues around meeting mathematical requirements, it is suggested the policy could helpfully be amended through the insertion of "approximately" in front of the percentage figures.'*
- 7.73 I have considered the various comments and HPC's responses to the clarification note carefully. Based on all the available evidence, I recommend the following modifications to the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow SCDC to be able to apply the policy through the development management process:
- a revision of the opening element of the policy so that it relates to two homes rather than to a single dwelling;
 - the application of the policy's starting point (for schemes large enough to include a housing mix) to ten homes rather than an indeterminate amount. This will bring a much more realistic approach to the package of measures proposed; and
 - commentary throughout the policy about needing to balance the mix of housing with commercial viability.

- 7.74 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of the first part of the policy with:

‘Wherever it is commercially viable to do so, development proposals that create two or more new dwellings should prioritise the delivery of homes with one, two or three bedrooms, over larger homes (with four or more bedrooms) unless an alternative dwelling size, type and mix can be justified through reference to up-to-date evidence on parish housing stock and local needs or to local site-specific circumstances.’

Replace the opening element of the second part of the policy with: ‘For development proposals which would deliver ten or more homes, the following approximate mix of homes will be sought:’

Replace the second part of the policy b) second bullet point with: ‘Where First Homes are included in the mix, they should be delivered at 50% discount, unless evidence is provided that a lower discount is needed for the purpose of delivering a viable product and it is evidenced that the products would be affordable to eligible local households.’

Replace the third part of the policy with: ‘Proposals which would provide an alternative mix to that set out in the second part of this policy should be supported by up-to-date evidence about the way in which they respond positively to the existing and future housing needs in the neighbourhood area.’

Policy HAR 16 Managing the movement of people and vehicles arising from new development

- 7.75 The context to the policy reflects the results of the 2023 householder survey shows that residents are concerned about traffic issues more than any other issue. Furthermore, the SWOT exercise undertaken following the 2023 householder survey identified a range of issues related to the movement of people and vehicles in and around Harston.
- 7.76 The resulting policy on the movement of people and the local impact of traffic is extensive.
- 7.77 The first part of the policy largely reinforces national policy on this matter. I raised this matter with HPC. In its response to the clarification note it advised that:

‘(the) policy is primarily a response to the existing conflicts that arise between different users on the highway along the A10 as well as along Church Street.’

Along the A10, there are specific issues relating to the number of motorised vehicles crossing the designated off-road cycle route. This includes the number of delivery vehicles and associated frequency of on-pavement short stops. It is felt the frequency of road user conflict and safety concerns around this is overlooked at the planning application stage, including by Highways. Such planning applications may involve the creation of new development that require direct access off the A10, including in locations that are opposite existing road junctions on to the A10. Clause 1, together with the context provided in the supporting paragraph (e.g. paragraph 11.6, Appendix 7) adds additionality to national and local planning policies.'

- 7.78 I saw the impact of traffic on the A10 on the character of the parish during the visit. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the first part of the policy adds value to national policy. Nevertheless, I recommend that it is recast so that it has a positive (setting out what development proposals should achieve) rather than a negative approach (identifying the types of development will not be supported). This will have regard to national policy for the preparation of positive planning policies.
- 7.79 I recommend the deletion of the second part of the policy and its relocation into the supporting text. This acknowledges that it is a process matter (the imposition of a condition on a planning application) rather than a land use planning matter.
- 7.80 Finally I recommend that the third part of the policy is modified to accommodate HPC's helpful response to the clarification note based on SCDC's representation. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with: 'Development proposals should be designed to accommodate safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle or vehicle movements arising from the development, including staff, visitors, and deliveries, to avoid creating severe significant impacts on highway safety.'

Delete the second part of the policy.

Replace the third part of the policy with: 'Where existing road safety issues are already established, development proposals should take any reasonable and available opportunities to address or alleviate these matters wherever it is practicable to do so. This includes measures designed to reduce the level of conflict between road users, especially between pedestrians and cyclists using the pavement/cycleway and motorised vehicles seeking to cross the cycleway, along the A10.'

Replace paragraph 11.17 with: 'Where highway safety concerns are demonstrated, consideration will be given to imposing conditions on the operation of the development that mitigate the impact on highway safety such as controlling hours of operation or delivery times. Many of the other potential interventions mentioned above can be delivered outside the land use planning system.'

Policy HAR 17 Recognising and mitigating the impacts of development on Church Street

7.81 The supporting text advises that the context to this policy is that the character and distinctiveness of Harston's historic core, described in Chapter 7 of the Plan, is in danger of being eroded through unsympathetic development and through heavy traffic flow. I saw the significance of traffic movements on the overall character of Church Street during the visit, both generally, and especially in relation to the GP surgery.

7.82 On the one hand, the intentions of the policy are clear. However, on the other hand, the policy seeks to apply the generalities of national and local planning policies on traffic movements to a specific part of the parish. In this context, I asked HPC to elaborate on its intentions and the extent to which a specific policy is needed. In its response to the clarification note, it advised that:

'the number and type of vehicular movements in and out of Button End industrial estate is having not only an impact on Button End itself but also along Church Street. Policy HAR 17 will ensure these issues will not be overlooked as part of future planning applications. The policy is included to ensure that the issues are identified and addressed; and mitigated as appropriate for the purpose of dealing with future planning applications.'

Policy HAR 17 is included to ensure the existing well-established and well evidenced issues around Church Street are taken into account when applicable planning applications come forward. This is not happening under the existing suite of Local Plan and national planning policies.'

7.83 I have also noted SCDC's representation on both elements of the policy.

7.84 As submitted, the first part of the policy is both confusing and unnecessarily detailed. At its heart is that development proposals which would have an adverse impact on Church Street will be required to be assessed in terms of their likely impact on road safety and residential amenity along Church Street. It also advises that this will apply to all proposals requiring highways access on to Church Street as well as proposals in other parts of the plan area (such as Button End) likely to generate movement of HGVs along Church Street. However, as drafted, the policy simply explains the way in which SCDC and the County Council would determine planning applications rather than being

presented as a land use policy. The two criteria at the end of this part of the policy provide such an approach.

- 7.85 In this context I recommend that the first part of the policy is recast so that it highlights the importance of the two criteria. Plainly the criteria can apply to any scheme irrespective of its location in the parish. As part of the recasting, I also recommend that the order of the two criteria is reversed to present a more logical approach.
- 7.86 I also recommend a modification to the second part of the policy to accommodate HPC's helpful responses to the clarification note based on SCDC's representation on this matter. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

'Development proposal in the neighbourhood area which would intensify traffic movements in Church Street should either:

- **demonstrate there will be no unacceptable adverse impacts on road safety for all users along Church Street because of the proposed scheme; or**
- **mitigate their impacts through on-site measures or contribute towards the implementation of Church Street traffic and street scene intervention measures (as advised in the supporting text and Appendix 6).**

Additionally, development proposals in the neighbourhood area that would lead to additional movement of HGV or other wide vehicles (large vans) along Church Street will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that mitigation measures are in place that ensure:

- **traffic can flow along Church Street without drivers of any vehicle being forced to drive on the pavement; and**
- **the historic buildings, including their setting, are not at risk from being damaged by vehicles including through vibrations.'**

Policy HAR 18 Parking provision in new development

- 7.87 This is a comprehensive policy on car parking. The supporting text advises that the High Street, Church Street, Button End, and Station Road in the vicinity of the primary school are not suitable for on-street parking. It also provides policy guidance for developments elsewhere in the parish.
- 7.88 The policy responds well to the circumstances experienced in the parish. I noted during the visit the delays caused to the free flow of traffic along the A10 by the parking of delivery vehicles. In general terms the policy takes a

positive and locally-distinctive approach to these local circumstances. However, in this context I recommend that the first part of the policy is recast so that it will apply where it is practicable to do so. This may reflect the uses proposed or the restrictions within the application site concerned. Given the nature of the recommended modification to the first part of the policy I recommend that the details in paragraph 11.34 of the Plan are expanded to refer to Button End.

- 7.89 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with:

‘Wherever practicable, all parking provision (including for visitors, customers, business vehicles including deliveries) should be provided within the curtilage of a property or otherwise off the highway, unless the development proposal concerned will not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity, lead to damage to road verges or compromise road safety through additional on-street parking.’

At the end of paragraph 11.34 add a further bullet point to read: ‘Button End. Button End is a narrow rural lane that is unsuitable for on-street parking.’

Policy HAR 19 The Footpath safeguarded land for future off-street parking

- 7.90 The support text advises that The Footpath is a narrow access road running north from Church Street, almost opposite to the GP surgery. It provides pedestrian and vehicle access to ten houses and access to a pumping station at its northern end. The pumping station is serviced by commercial tanker lorries.
- 7.91 The policy comments that the land is safeguarded for a package of uses - the southern part of the site as an off-road car park with landscaping to mitigate impact on the openness of the Green Belt to the north, and the remainder of the site to be set aside for biodiversity enhancements to benefit local wildlife and provide an area of informal amenity space.
- 7.92 This is an innovative and distinctive approach. The policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy HAR 20 Telephone exchange site

- 7.93 The supporting text advises that it is anticipated that the land behind Harston Village Hall may at some point during the Plan period not be needed as a telephone exchange site. It advises that the site is ideally located for the

purpose of providing public parking spaces to be accessed off the High Street and via the Harston Village Hall car park.

- 7.94 I looked at the Telephone exchange site carefully during the visit. I noted its relationship to the Village Hall to the west and to the surrounding houses. For clarity, I sought commentary from HPC about the extent to which the final sentence of the policy supports proposals for the redevelopment of the site as a car park, or other proposals which would help to deliver that objective. Similarly, I sought advice on the extent to which any such car park be delivered and managed and would provide an extended Village Hall car park. In its response to the clarification note HPC advised that:

‘the final sentence is intended to mean proposals that support the redevelopment of the site as a public car park would be supported. The Parish Council wishes to emphasize at this point that the Village Hall car park is not owned by the Parish Council and it is not a public car park open to use by people other than those using the village hall. This is an aspirational policy. The Parish Council aspiration is that the land identified as part of Policy HAR 20 would be owned by the Parish Council. The site is ideally located for such a use and would help address road safety issues associated by unsafe on street parking along the A10/High Street. To improve clarity, the Parish Council suggests an amendment to the policy’

- 7.95 I also note the comments from SCDC. Nevertheless, an alternative use for the site would be for residential purposes given that the site is within the built-up part of the village. Such proposals could be considered on their merits, and are not prevented by the submitted policy (or HPC’s suggested changes to its content).
- 7.96 Taking account of all the comments, I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to the redevelopment of the site should it no longer be needed for telecommunications purposes. The management of the car park would be a matter for detailed agreement between the relevant parties. I recommend that the policy is replaced by a slight revision of that proposed by HPC in its response to the clarification note. It will bring the clarity required by the NPPF, and allow SCDC to apply it through the development management process.
- 7.97 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of each of the dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with: ‘Should the site no longer be needed for its current use, land at the existing telephone exchange site (as shown on Map 16) is identified as a suitable location for future provision of a public car park, to be accessed off the High Street. Development

proposals that would deliver the car park will be supported where they comply with other development plan policies.'

Policy HAR 21 Connecting our village through an improved network of active travel rural routes

- 7.98 The supporting text advises that existing active travel network is greatly valued in Harston. 85% of those responding to the applicable question in the 2023 householder survey agreed that 'attractive countryside and countryside paths' was a positive aspect about living in Harston. It also advises that the aspirations for improvements to the network are listed in the policy.
- 7.99 The resulting policy is comprehensive in its nature. In general terms I am satisfied that it takes a positive approach to active travel and has regard to Sections 8 and 9 of the NPPF. The incorporation of aspirations for improvements to the network in both the policy and the supporting text provides real clarity to the approach taken, and is best practice.
- 7.100 In this context I recommend a series of modifications to the policy and the supporting text to reflect HPC's responses to the clarification note and SCDC's representation on the policy. Whilst they do not change the intent of the policy, they bring the clarity required by the NPPF and ensure that proposals which achieve the ambitions of the policy are also considered against all relevant development plan policies. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with: 'The existing network of rural routes, comprising both Public Rights of Way and the network of permissive routes, shown on Maps 17 and 18, providing important outdoor recreational opportunities and providing active travel links into neighbouring settlements of Barrington, Haslingfield, Hauxton, and Newton will be protected or enhanced. Where opportunities arise to create new links into the existing network, proposals will be expected to do so, having regard to the aspirations described in the supporting text and shown on Map 18.'

Replace the opening element of the third part of the policy with: 'Development proposals that will help achieve the parish-wide aspirations listed below, described in the supporting text and shown on Map 18, will be supported, subject to the proposal concerned otherwise complying with provisions of the development plan:'

In paragraph 12.12 replace 'routes vii) and "viii)' with 'routes 7 and 8'

Policy HAR 22 Delivering active travel infrastructure as part of new development

- 7.101 The context to the policy is HPC's view that, irrespective of their location and size, development proposals that will lead to the movement of people and vehicles should be designed to facilitate safe and attractive movement for non-motorised users. The resulting policy is wide-ranging.
- 7.102 I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Sections 8 and 9 of the NPPF. It has been carefully designed so that it can be applied proportionately, and where it is practicable to do so. As such the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy HAR 23 Harston Pavilion

- 7.103 The supporting text advises that the Pavilion is located off The Limes, within the recreation ground, and outside the village development framework. Half of the recreation ground is located within the green belt, with the other half designated as a Local Green Space in the Local Plan. HPC plans to redevelop the pavilion.
- 7.104 The policy advises that development proposals that provide an improved and extended pavilion for the purpose of delivering enhanced community facilities (including improved sports and community meeting space provision) will be supported where they meet a series of criteria.
- 7.105 I looked at the pavilion and the associated recreation areas carefully during the visit. This is an excellent policy with locally-distinctive criteria. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy HAR 24 Harston and Newton Community Primary School

- 7.106 The supporting text advises that the Primary school is an invaluable part of community life in the parish, primarily for providing primary education to village children. A pre-school is also run 5 days a week on the site of the school. In addition, the school is used as a community meeting space outside of school hours. The policy offers support to proposals which would help to sustain the school and the pre-school.
- 7.107 I saw the location and importance of the school during the visit. In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF. In this context, I recommend that the reference to

housing targeted for young families is deleted from the policy and repositioned into the supporting text. Whilst the approach taken has a degree of logic, there is no guarantee that housing targeted for young families will be occupied by people with children. In coming to this conclusion, I have given appropriate weight to HPC's response to the clarification note.

- 7.108 I also recommend that the second part of the policy is modified so that it uses wording more appropriate to a neighbourhood plan. Otherwise, it will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

'Development proposals which will help sustain and enhance pre-school or primary school infrastructure in the parish will be supported where they meet other development plan policies.'

Development proposals that would damage the viability of the pre-school or primary school will not be supported.'

At the end of paragraph 13.13 add: 'In this context Policy HAR24 offers support to development proposals which will help sustain and enhance pre-school or primary school infrastructure. (for example, through housing which is targeted at younger families).'

Policy HAR 25 Harston's community infrastructure

- 7.109 The supporting text comments that it is not the intention of this policy to undermine the delivery of necessary on-site infrastructure needs that are triggered by a particular scheme (e.g. on-site play provision). However, where schemes are found to have certain impacts on village life such as congestion, it is appropriate for such impacts to be mitigated through off site contributions towards appropriate interventions.

- 7.110 The policy has two related parts:

- the provision of new and improved infrastructure in the parish should be informed by the infrastructure priorities identified in the supporting text to this policy; and
- all development proposals in the plan area should contribute towards infrastructure priorities where it is necessary to make the development acceptable and where directly, fairly, and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

- 7.111 In general terms the policy takes an appropriate and reasonable approach to the delivery of infrastructure. I recommend that the second part is recast to remove the unnecessary reference to all proposals and the neighbourhood

area. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the second part of the policy with: ‘Development proposals should contribute towards infrastructure priorities where it is necessary to make the development acceptable and where directly, fairly, and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.’

Policy HAR 26 Supporting shops and services along Harston’s High Street

7.112 The supporting text advises that whilst the shops and services in Harston are in different locations along the A10, they are conveniently located for the purpose of attracting passing trade. This helps to sustain the businesses, shops, and services and this in turn, benefits Harston residents. The policy comments that development proposals along Harston’s High Street and Royston Road, and within the village development framework, that diversify and enhance the range of shops and services will be supported where a series of criteria are met.

7.113 The policy takes a positive approach to supporting shops and services and is underpinned by distinctive local criteria. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of each of the dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy HAR 27 Land at Station Road (SIG Roofing Site)

7.114 The supporting text advises that site is currently used for industrial purposes and comprises previously developed land (Old Station Good’s Yard) in the Green Belt.

7.115 The policy allocates the site for residential development. I looked at the site carefully during the visit. I saw its relationship with the village and the railway line. In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to the development of the site and has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF. In addition, it is a previously-developed site in the Green Belt and seeks to build in appropriate safeguards for its redevelopment in accordance with Section 13 of the NPPF.

7.116 Paragraph 14.9 helpfully explains the planning context to the site and advises that the policy seeks to avoid the issues faced by the 2019 planning application. Plainly decisions on any future planning applications will be a matter of judgement for SCDC, taking account of this policy, other development plan policies, and national policy on Green Belts.

7.117 SCDC suggest that policy should include a reference to the East West Rail safeguarding direction as this may result in some of the land within the current

allocation being unsuitable and unavailable for residential uses, and any proposal for this site will need to take into account the likely relationship between the proposed use and the nearby railway line.

- 7.118 I sought advice from HPC about the extent to which it had considered including further details about the number of homes that would be appropriate for the site, their height and massing, and the layout of the site (both generally and in response to the Planning Inspector's decision on the earlier proposal). In its response to the clarification note, it commented that:

'If the East West Rail development consent order is granted, there is a possibility that some of the land shown on Map 20 will be needed as part of the confirmed safeguarding order. The number of homes will also be restricted by the presence of the railway. Given the information set out in the previous proposal, there could be capacity for approximately 10 dwellings (16 minus 4 to account for EWR if EWR goes ahead). Exact numbers and design and landscaping requirements would depend on whether the East West Rail DCO is granted.'

- 7.119 I have considered these matters very carefully. Based on all the evidence, I recommend the following package of modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow SCDC to be able to apply the policy through the development management process:

- a recasting of the policy so that it deletes the reference to Policy HAR24 (which is subject to its own recommended modifications);
- ensures that any development on the site is also subject to compliance with other development plan policies;
- information is included in the supporting text about the Safeguarding Order which affects the site; and
- information is included in the supporting text about the potential yield of the site.

- 7.120 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of each of the dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with: 'Residential development on land at Station Road (as shown Map 20) that helps to meet Harston specific housing needs as identified in Chapter 10 of this Plan will be supported where the proposal meets the exceptions for land in the Green Belt in paragraph 154 of the NPPF (December 2023) and complies with other development plan policies.'

At the end of paragraph 14.10 add:

'If the East West Rail development consent order is granted, there is a possibility that some of the land shown on Map 20 will be needed as part of the confirmed safeguarding order. The number of homes will also be restricted by the presence of the railway. Given the information set out in the 2019 proposal, there could be capacity for the site to deliver approximately 10 dwellings. Exact numbers and design and landscaping requirements would depend on whether the East West Rail Development Consent Order is granted.'

Replace paragraph 4.11 with 'East West Rail have commented that part of the land included on Map 20, may be required for the purpose of delivering East West Rail. It is currently affected by a Safeguarding Order. As such, the site boundary shown on Map 20 is subject to change depending on the outcome of this strategic project.'

Policy HAR 28 131 High Street

- 7.121 The supporting text advises that the site is 0.46 hectares in size, is located to the west of the High Street, and is within the development framework. The land is previously developed, last used as a nursery (horticultural use). The site is flat and visually enclosed, thereby limiting landscape and visual impacts in the surrounding area.
- 7.122 The policy comments that the site is allocated for the development of approximately 6 to 8 small dwellings suitable for meeting Harston's needs for smaller family homes and homes for older households to downsize into (predominantly 2- and 3-bedroom homes) It also advises that development is expected to come forward in the medium term (approximately 2030 onwards).
- 7.123 I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to the delivery of this site and has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF. Within this context I recommend a series of recommended modification to the policy and the supporting text which reflect SCDC's comments and HPC's helpful responses to the suggested changes. Collectively they will bring the clarity required by the NPPF. The recommended modifications to paragraph 14.15 more fully explain the relationship between the policy and the HRA.
- 7.124 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the local delivery of each of the dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy delete the final sentence.

In paragraph 14.12 replace ‘and within the development framework’ with ‘and is partially within the development framework boundary and partially outside of the development framework boundary.’

At the end of paragraph 14.15 add: ‘Development is expected to come forward in the medium term (approximately 2030 onwards). Due to the potential recreational pressures from new homes on this High Street site on habitat sites at Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Wicken Fen Ramsar site and Fenland SAC, HNP has been subjected to an Appropriate Assessment in line with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Following Natural England guidance mitigation measures are required from this development that encourage new residents to use other alternative accessible greenspaces and dog walking routes for significant proportions of their day-to-day recreational needs. A financial contribution to Harston Parish Council for the provision of information to new residents on local greenspaces and walking routes, dog off lead areas, and locations of dog waste bins, will be sought to meet this requirement.’

Community Projects

- 7.125 The Plan includes a series of Community Projects. They are set out in a separate part of the Plan (Section 16) to distinguish them from the land use policies. This is best practice
- 7.126 I am satisfied that the Community Projects are appropriate and distinctive to the parish.

Implementation and Monitoring

- 7.127 Section 17 of the Plan addresses these matters to very good effect. It proposes mechanisms for reviewing planning applications and monitoring planning decisions. This is best practice.
- 7.128 The section on the ‘Appropriateness of the Plan’ comments about the need to assess whether the policies are informed by the most up to date information, and continue to be effective. This is also best practice. However, within this overall context I recommend that HPC consider the need for a full or partial review of the Plan within 6 months of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan. This is important both generally, and given the wider growth ambitions in that Plan.

Add an additional paragraph (17.4) to read ‘Over time, and depending on the outcomes of the interim reviews, a full or partial review of the Plan will be considered. Within this broader context the Parish Council will consider the need or otherwise for a full or partial review of the Plan within six months of

the adoption of the emerging Local Plan, which will provide an up-to-date planning context for both the wider District and the neighbourhood area.'

Other Matters – General

- 7.129 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 because 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 because 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 SCDC and HPC 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.

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 2041. 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.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Harston 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 South Cambridgeshire District Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report the Harston 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 District Council on 17 June 2022.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner. The responses to the clarification note were detailed, informative and delivered in a very timely fashion.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
17 June 2025