

# **Little Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2039**

**A report to Buckinghamshire Council on the Little  
Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Development  
Plan**

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1 I was appointed by Buckinghamshire Council in May 2026 to carry out the independent examination of the Little Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 28 May 2026.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It also includes policies to safeguard the built and historic environment, maintain the separation of settlements, and proposes a package of local green spaces. The Plan is commendably focused on a clear set of locally-distinctive issues.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum area should coincide with the neighbourhood area.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**8 October 2026**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Little Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2039 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Buckinghamshire Council (BC) by Little Missenden Parish Council (LMPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan. The neighbourhood area was designated on 4 October 2022.
- 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) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2026. 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 existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance, can maintain the separation of settlements. It also proposes a package of local green spaces.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the neighbourhood area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

## 2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by BC, with the consent of LMPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both BC and LMPC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have 43 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 and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

### *Examination Outcomes*

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

### *Other examination matters*

- 2.6 In examining the Plan, I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
  - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
  - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met.
- 2.8 Section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 was enacted in March 2026. It requires that a neighbourhood plan:

- so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, must be designed to ensure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change; and
- so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, must be designed to take account of any local nature recovery strategy under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021 that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood plan area.

2.9 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.8 of this report and have taken account of the information in the Addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement (May 2026). I am satisfied that the submitted Plan complies with these two requirements.

### 3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement (May 2026).
- the Non-Designated Heritage Assets note.
- the Strategic Gaps and Buffer Zones note.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Buckinghamshire Council SEA/HRA Screening report.
- the Local Green Spaces Assessment note.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- The representation to the Addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement.
- LMPC's responses to the clarification note.
- the saved policies Chiltern District Local Plan (1997).
- the adopted Core Strategy for Chiltern District (2011) (the Core Strategy).
- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024 and August 2026).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 28 May 2026. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

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

3.4 The enactment of Section 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 in March 2026 changed the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is assessed. In order to address this matter LMPC produced an addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement during the examination. BC undertook targeted consultation on the revised Statement. Section 4 of this report addresses this matter alongside the broader responses to the Plan.

3.5 A revised version of the NPPF was published in August 2026. The implementation arrangement in its Annex A advise that plans submitted before its publication date (17 August 2026) will have been prepared on the basis of the 2024 version of the NPPF. This applies to the submitted Plan. The examination has continued on this basis. Any references to the NPPF in this report are to the December 2024 version of the document.

## 4 Consultation

### *Consultation Process*

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such, the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), LMPC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies. It is a comprehensive report which is supported by more detailed appendices. This is best practice.
- 4.3 The Summary section identifies the main public events that were arranged during the Plan preparation process. Section 2 identifies the principal ways in which LMPC engaged with the public and stakeholders. Section 3 comments about the details of key consultation events. It also comments on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (May to June 2025).
- 4.4 Annex C comments about the details of the way in which the Plan was refined because of the consultation on the pre-submission Plan. This analysis contributes to the legibility of the relevant information and helps to describe how the Plan has progressed to the submission stage.
- 4.5 Consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. BC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

### *Consultation Responses*

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by BC which finished on 8 January 2026. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
  - CALA
  - Penn Parish Council
  - Rural Solutions
  - Natural England
  - National Grid
  - Hawridge Land
  - National Highways
  - Network Rail
  - Buckinghamshire Council

- 4.7 Comments were also received from several residents.
- 4.8 Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to specific representations on a policy-by-policy basis.
- 4.9 A separate consultation exercise was undertaken by BC on the Addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement. This generated a representation from the Environment Agency
- 4.10 I have taken all the comments into account in preparing this report. They have been helpful as part of the wider examination of the Plan.

## 5. The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

### *The Neighbourhood Area*

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is Little Missenden parish. It sits within the Chiltern Hills National Landscape, about 3 miles (5 km) southeast of Great Missenden and 3 miles (5 km) west of Amersham. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 4 October 2022. In 2021 its population was 6606 people living in 2630 homes.
- 5.2 The Parish includes the villages of Little Missenden, Holmer Green, Hyde Heath and Little Kingshill, as well as the hamlets of Beamond End, Brays Green, Mop End and Spurlands End. The four villages have their own distinct and unique setting, and each has a mixed architectural character. The majority of the parish lies within the Green Belt although the built-up area of Holmer Green is inset within the Green Belt. The Chiltern Local Plan Policies Map shows that the villages of Little Missenden, Hyde Heath and Little Kingshill have parts of their built-up areas designated as 'Rows of buildings within Green Belt' or 'Green Belt Settlement'.
- 5.3 The parish is divided by the River Misbourne with the villages of Holmer Green, Little Kingshill and Little Missenden to the south of the river and Hyde Heath to the North. The area of the Parish most at risk from flooding is Little Missenden which sits partially within the flood plain of the river.

### *Development Plan Context*

- 5.4 The development plan for the neighbourhood area consists of the Chiltern District 1997 Local Plan, the Core Strategy for Chiltern District 2011, and the Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2019, taken as a whole.
- 5.5 The most significant factor on neighbourhood plan policy-making is the Green Belt which covers most of the parish. Policy GB2 of the 1997 Local Plan remains a key policy on this matter.
- 5.6 The following policies in the Core Strategy have been particularly important in underpinning the approach taken in the submitted Plan:
  - CS1 The Spatial Strategy
  - CS2 Amount and Distribution of Residential Development
  - CS9 Affordable Housing in Rural Areas
  - CS19 Supporting the Rural Economy
  - CS20 Design and Environmental Quality
  - CS22 Chilterns AONB
  - CS24 Biodiversity
  - CS27 Working for a Healthier Community
- 5.7 BC is working on an emerging Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme advises about the timetable for the remaining stages:
  - Regulation 19 consultation (July to September 2026);

- submission for examination (December 2026);
- examination (December 2026 to September 2027); and
- adoption (December 2027).

In this context the Regulation 19 version of the Plan was published on XX July 2026. Comments are invited by 6 September 2026.

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

*Visit to the neighbourhood area*

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 28 May 2026. I approached from Wendover to the north. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape in general and its accessibility to the road network in particular.
- 5.10 I looked carefully at the various settlements and the proposed local green spaces
- 5.11 I took time to look in detail at the proposed Strategic Gaps and the Buffer Zone as set out in Policy SD1 of the Plan. I saw the clear importance of the Green Belt within the neighbourhood area.
- 5.12 I left the neighbourhood area by driving to Amersham to the east. This part of the visit highlighted the relationship between the parish and another town in the immediate locality.

## 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 and its Addendum have helped in the preparation of this section of the report. They are informative and well-presented documents.
- 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.

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

### *National Planning Policies and Guidance*

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Little Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the saved policies of the Chiltern Local Plan (1997), and the Core Strategy (2011);
  - building a strong, competitive economy;
  - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
  - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
  - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
  - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF

indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

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

*Contributing to sustainable development*

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes policies for local businesses and agriculture (Policy LF4). In the social dimension, it includes policies on local facilities (Policy LF1), green spaces (Policy LF2), and local green spaces (Policy LF3). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has policies on rural character and landscape (Policies LC1 and LC2), on heritage matters (Policies HE1 and HE2), on strategic buffers (Policy SD1) and on design (Policy SD2). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

*Not have the effect of preventing development from taking place which is proposed in the development plan for the area of the authority*

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the former Chiltern district within Buckinghamshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 The Addendum Basic Conditions Statement comments that the Plan's policies in the Plan do not prevent the delivery of the housing requirements of the adopted Local Plan and Core Strategy. It also comments that the proposed buffer zones are not located within areas that are designated for development through the Adopted Local Plan and Core Strategy.
- 6.13 I agree with this assessment and am satisfied that the implementation of the Plan will not have the effect of preventing development from taking place which is proposed in the development plan.

#### *Strategic Environmental Assessment*

- 6.14 The Neighbourhood Plan (General) (Amendment) 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 In order to comply with this requirement, BC undertook a screening exercise in September 2025 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that it is unlikely that significant environmental effects will arise from the implementation of the Plan and that SEA is not needed.

#### *Habitats Regulations Assessment*

- 6.16 BC prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. It advises that there are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the neighbourhood area. However, it advises that around half of the parish lies within the 12.6km Zone of Influence of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, and that the nearest part of the parish is approximately 9.7km from the SAC. It also advises that the neighbourhood area is not within the Exclusion Zone.
- 6.17 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on protected sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.18 Having reviewed the available information I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns regarding either neighbourhood plan obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of neighbourhood plan regulations.

*Human Rights*

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

*Summary*

- 6.20 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 LMPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (Section 41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the 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 1-6)*

- 7.8 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 carefully sets the scene for the Plan. It identifies the neighbourhood area (in Plan A) and the Plan period (in paragraph 1.2).
- 7.10 Section 2 comments comprehensively on the national and local planning contexts which have underpinned the production of the Plan.
- 7.11 Section 3 comments about the neighbourhood area to good effect. It provides information on its rural nature, its population, its age profile, and its housing tenures.
- 7.12 Section 4 comments about the way in which the community was engaged as the Plan was being prepared. It overlaps with the submitted Consultation Statement.
- 7.13 Section 5 comments about the vision and objectives of the Plan. It makes a strong functional relationship between the objectives and the resulting policies. The Vision neatly summarises the approach taken as follows:

*'The villages of Holmer Green, Little Missenden, Hyde Heath and Little Kingshill and the hamlets of Beamond End, Brays Green, Mop End and Spurlands End will retain their separate identities and rural settings in the Green Belt and The Chilterns National Landscape. Across the Parish, high quality amenities for all ages will be provided,*

*green spaces will be improved and rural retail, leisure and small business opportunities will be supported.*

*Holmer Green: The community vision for Holmer Green is to retain its rural character, protect green spaces and continue to be a thriving village to live in. New development in Holmer Green must be accompanied by improvements in infrastructure to accommodate new residents and new development should be sympathetically designed to reinforce and preserve the rural character of the village.*

*Little Missenden: The village will continue to be a thriving, safe and friendly village where people want to live, work and play. The character of the village will be maintained and enhanced whilst supporting sustainable development that respects its historic, agricultural and rural character within the Chilterns for the benefit of all residents and visitors alike.*

*Hyde Heath: The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to protect and enhance Hyde Heath while retaining its small-scale rural character. The sense of community spirit characteristic of the village will be promoted to encourage people to want to live and enjoy the village. Future housing design and development will respect the nature of the village and fulfil the needs of the community.*

*Little Kingshill: The community vision for Little Kingshill is to retain its rural character and preserve green space for all to use. The sense of community spirit that is characteristic of Little Kingshill will be nurtured and enhanced so that people will want to live here to enjoy good health and well-being within its rural environment. Future housing and design and small-scale development will respect the rural nature of the village by fulfilling the needs important to the community.'*

- 7.14 Section 6 sets out a series of Sustainable Development Principles to good effect.
- 7.15 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

#### LC1 Rural Character

- 7.16 The policy sets the context for new development to ensure rural character is retained. It advises that developments should ensure that they are sympathetic to local character including the landscape setting within the Chilterns National Landscape. The policy is underpinned by the Chiltern District Landscape Character Assessment 2011.
- 7.17 The policy takes a very positive approach to landscape character. I am satisfied that it has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. In this broader context recommend a modification to the policy so that BC can apply its details in a proportionate way. This would avoid unreasonable expectations being placed on minor and domestic proposals.
- 7.18 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

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

**‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should respect the rural character of the parish set within The Chilterns National Landscape by ensuring that:’**

LC2 Protecting the Landscape

- 7.19 The policy comments that development proposals should ensure that they protect and enhance the historic and natural landscape. The policy is underpinned by the Chiltern District Landscape Character Assessment 2011.
- 7.20 The policy takes a very positive approach to landscape character. As with Policy LC1 I recommend a modification to the policy so that BC can apply its details in a proportionate way. This would avoid unreasonable expectations being placed on minor and domestic proposals.
- 7.21 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

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

**‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should recognise and seek to protect and enhance the historic and natural landscape and local character of the parish, including field ponds, rivers, streams, mature trees and hedgerows.’**

NE1 Woodlands, Orchards, Trees and Hedgerows

- 7.22 The policy requires proposals to prepare a tree and hedgerow survey and retain trees of value and replace trees that will be lost or removed.
- 7.23 The supporting text advises that much of the parish is characterised by woodlands, trees and hedgerows in varying proportions across the area. These natural features are important in several ways, they are an intrinsic part of the special landscape of the Chilterns, they provide important elements for biodiversity including as wildlife corridors and form part of the historic landscape.
- 7.24 In general terms this is a good policy which has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 7.25 BC queries the requirement in the policy for applications to provide details about the condition of trees and hedges. In its response to the clarification note LMPC comments that it disagrees with BC’s proposed change to the policy wording as it would dilute the intention to protect these important assets.
- 7.26 I have considered the details of the policy and BC’s comments very carefully. In this context I recommend that first and third elements of the policy are combined. The approach taken in the third negates the need for the second.

- 7.27 I also recommend that the reference to the information required is deleted from the policy and relocated into the supporting text. This acknowledges that it addresses a process matter rather than a land use policy.
- 7.28 I am satisfied that the final element of the policy on orchards meets the basic conditions. Its approach is underpinned by the Chalk Cherries and Chairs project (which is sponsored by the Chilterns National Landscape).
- 7.29 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Wherever practicable, development proposals should retain trees and hedgerows of arboricultural, historic and amenity value and incorporate them into their design and layout. Where trees and hedgerows cannot be retained, they should be replaced within the site using species of native provenance.**

**Development proposals should not adversely affect historic orchards, particularly cherry orchards.’**

*At end of paragraph 8.7 add:*

*‘Proposals that cannot retain all the trees and hedgerows on the site concerned should be accompanied by a survey that establishes the age, health and longevity of any affected trees or hedgerows alongside appropriate information on the scale, nature and provenance of the proposed replacements.’*

**NE2 Biodiversity**

- 7.30 This policy comments that development proposals are expected to retain natural features, and enhance them, provide at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity and plant new landscaping.
- 7.31 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to biodiversity and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. Within this context I recommend the following modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow BC to implement its contents through the development management process:
- revisions to the wording used in the first part of the policy to acknowledge that the enhancement of natural features will not always be practicable;
  - the deletion of the examples in the first part of the policy as they are largely addressed in paragraph 8.15;
  - revisions to the wording used in the second part of the policy so that its effect is more explicit (would harm rather than could potentially harm); and
  - the deletion of the third part of the policy to acknowledge that it is a process rather than a land use policy and that it is largely addressed in paragraph 8.16.
- 7.32 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Development should protect and where practicable enhance existing natural features of sites, wildlife corridors and where appropriate provide at least 10% net gain in biodiversity.**

**Development that would harm the Misbourne Chalk Stream and detract from its ecological importance will not be supported.’**

HE1 Conservation Area and its setting

- 7.33 This policy seeks to conserve the Little Missenden Conservation Area and its setting. In general terms the policy has regard to Section 16 of the NPPF.
- 7.34 I saw the importance of the Conservation Area during the visit. Nevertheless, I sought LMPC’s views on the extent to which the policy brings any added value beyond national and local policies. In its response to the clarification note LMPC advised about its approach to the policy and the added value brought by the Design Guidance and Codes. Based on my own observations of the Conservation Area and LMPC’s responses I recommend that the policy is modified.
- 7.35 The modified policy will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Development proposals in the Little Missenden Conservation Area and its setting should achieve high quality design, set in a clear context in terms of materials, scale, setting and layout. Development proposals should respond positively to the following criteria:**

- **they should be in accordance with the relevant design principles and codes set out in the Little Missenden Parish Design Guidance and Codes.**
- **their scale and massing should respond to and reflect the immediate area;**
- **they should use locally distinctive details (including materials, openings/access and boundary treatments).**

**As appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposal concerned, applicants should explain in a Design and Access Statement and/or Heritage Statement, how the proposal will address these criteria.’**

HE2 Protecting and enhancing Local Heritage Assets

- 7.36 This policy seeks to conserve non-designated historic assets and their setting. I saw the significance of the proposed non-designated heritage assets during the visit. The policy approach helpfully reflects that in paragraph 216 of the NPPF.
- 7.37 I recommend a modification to the wording used in the first part of the policy to incorporate the matter raised about the types of buildings being addressed in Annex

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

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

**‘Development proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets and the identified local heritage assets set out in Annex 2 should take into account the character, context and setting of the assets. Development proposals should be designed in a way which takes account of local styles, materials and detail.’**

SD1 Strategic Buffer zones and development within settlements

- 7.38 This is an important policy in the overall context of the Plan. The support text comments that it seeks to provide separation between settlements and parts of villages which make up the parish where the erosion of the gaps would have an adverse, irreversible impact on the character of the area. It also seeks to allow appropriate infill in Holmer Green which is excluded from the Green Belt. In specific terms the policy proposes the identification of Buffers Zones and a Strategic Gap. The second part of the policy comments about development proposals within the settlement area of Holmer Green and within the defined Green Belt Settlement/rows of dwellings in Green Belt at Little Kingshill, Hyde Heath and Little Missenden.
- 7.39 The element of the policy on Buffers Zones and a Strategic Gap has attracted considerable and detailed interest from BC and landowners.

BC comments that:

*‘The Tralee Farm Strategic Gap and the Watchet Lane Buffer Zone are outside of the designated neighbourhood area and including them in the plan and policies map is misleading and does not meet the basic conditions, because NP policies can only cover the Neighbourhood Area to which the NP relates.*

*The map identifying the Little Kingshill Rural Heart Buffer Zone lacks sufficient clarity. The buffer zone is illustrated using a zigzag line, which does not clearly define its precise extent. It is therefore recommended that, should the policy be kept in the plan beyond examination, the area is shown using a more definitive method.*

*The supporting commentary states that the buffer zone has been designated in response to changes to Green Belt designations. However, the land currently remains within the Green Belt. Moreover, the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, including the published Green Belt Review, does not propose removing this site from the Green Belt. While the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan to provide additional protection should circumstances change is acknowledged, the introduction of a buffer zone in this location is considered unnecessary and duplicative. The area is already subject to several layers of protection: it remains within the Green Belt; it is washed over by the Chilterns National Landscape. Parts of the larger site area have also been designated as Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan.’*

Hawridge Land comments that:

*'The (Plan) purports to allocate land at Tralee Farm as a "strategic gap" and, while the text in draft Policy SD1, which sets out in respect of development at Tralee Farm that "New development which would encroach visually and/or functionally on the Strategic Gap should be refused" has now been removed from the plan, it remains designated on the Policy Map at Annex 1 (the "Draft Allocation").*

*Tralee Farm sits outside of Little Missenden Parish Council's Neighbourhood Area, is outside of the (Plan) boundary and is already subject to the Hazlemere Neighbourhood Plan 2023 ("Reason 1"). Therefore, it cannot lawfully be included in the (Plan)*

*The Watchet Lane Buffer Zone, whilst similarly located outside of the Plan Area, is shown in purple to denote that it sits outside of the area. The Draft Allocation is however still shown in green, as though it were inside the Plan Area*

*Further, the Draft Allocation is inconsistent with the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019, the Hazlemere Neighbourhood Plan 2023 and the planning permissions that have been granted by Buckinghamshire Council with references 23/05440/OUT and 21/08364/FUL ("Reason 2").*

*On the basis of Reason 1 alone, the Draft Allocation is unlawful and must be removed from the (Plan). The Draft Allocation also cannot be taken forward because of Reason 2 (notwithstanding that it is unlawful in any event, regardless of conflict with the Local Plan)'*

Rural Solutions comment that:

*'The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should set out a 'positive vision' for the future of the local area. And must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.*

*However, by its own admission, it would appear that Policy SD1 of the Neighbourhood Plan has been drafted in such a way as to provide 'protection' against the implications of potential emerging policy from the Local Planning Authority.*

*Specifically, it notes (within the Strategic Gaps and Buffer Zones document, paragraph 34) that the now withdrawn Draft Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036 - Publication Version, proposed releasing the village of Little Kingshill from the washed over Green Belt. It reports that this has led to local concern about the vulnerability of currently open land within the centre to development which could have a detrimental impact on the character and form of the village". "*

*It also specifically makes reference to 'local speculation regarding a potential 250 house proposal on this land', in response to land being put forward to a Call for Sites consultation run by Buckinghamshire Council (Strategic Gaps and Buffer Zones document, paragraph 37).*

*Part of the Neighbourhood Plan's explanation for the designation of land as 'Strategic Buffer Zones' is that they "should only be designated on land between settlements or parts of settlements where potential development has been proposed in the call for*

*sites, in areas close to settlements or along radial roads". (Table within paragraph 10, Strategic Gaps and Buffer Zones document, paragraph 34).*

*It is suggested that this does not represent 'positive planning' as the NPPF encourages, and that the Neighbourhood Plan is simply looking to prevent development coming forward in the villages. It is noted the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any land for allocation in the villages.*

*The Government introduced changes to Green Belt policy in its December 2024 updates to the NPPF. Green Belt policy still maintains high levels of protection for the Green Belt, setting out that development, except for the exceptions set out in paragraph 15 4, would be 'inappropriate development in the Green Belt' and not allowed unless special circumstances were demonstrated.*

*Current National Planning Policy however requires local planning authorities to undertake a Green Belt review as part of the plan making process. And this includes the identification of 'Grey Belt' land.*

*We note the Draft Neighbourhood Plan makes no reference to the concept of Grey Belt and consider it should be considering these criteria when looking to land effectively strengthen protection on Green Belt land, some of which could potentially be considered Grey Belt land, where this would be considered inappropriate in the context of National Planning Policy.*

*It is noted that the Neighbourhood Plan sees Strategic Buffer Zones as providing protection whether the village is maintained or removed from the washed over Green Belt. currently However, it remains within the Green Belt and as such the Neighbourhood Plan policies need to be considered in that context.*

*In our view, the introduction of 'strategic buffer zones' within the Neighbourhood Plan is not consistent with the clear direction of national policy to potentially allow for development in the Green Belt (Grey Belt) in sustainable locations, and where clear need exists, land does not contribute to the identified purposes of the Green Belt.'*

- 7.40 I saw the way in which the various settlements in the neighbourhood area were separated one from the other. On the one hand, the policy addresses Strategic Buffer Zones in a non-prescriptive way that does not prevent development but requires that it avoids an unacceptable impression of merging settlements/parts of settlements by themselves or through cumulative impacts with other developments. The policy is also underpinned by the Strategic Gaps and Buffer Zones background note. In this context, I invited LMPC to expanded on the approach it had pursued in the Plan. In its response to the clarification note it advised that:

*'From the start of this process the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group recognised and fully supported the controlled development of new housing in our Parish.*

*In developing the Neighbourhood Plan, we sought to identify the important and critical elements of particular relevance to the villages and wider Parish that should be preserved while ensuring that the preservation of our local identity did not prevent well-*

*presented, sympathetically planned new developments. We consider our approach to be a very positive step in assisting developers to plan their development satisfactorily.*

*The mandatory buffer zone implemented in the High Wycombe Local Plan for the HW8 Tralee Farm development was designed specifically and enshrined in policy (Local Plan 5.1) to prevent the coalescence of Holmer Green and Hazlemere. This buffer zone demonstrated the mechanism used to preserve our separate identities without preventing or adversely impacting the development of the site.*

*This innovation demonstrated how we might achieve our objective of preserving the separate identities of the settlements and parts of the settlement of Little Kingshill while not obstructing new housing developments.'*

- 7.41 Paragraph 10.11 of the Plan also raises related issues about the Plan's anticipation that BC will revise Green Belt boundaries in the parish, and that it is the role of a neighbourhood plan to identify land that should not be allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan. I invited LMPC to explain its approach to these matters both generally, and given the comments that BC made in its representation about its approach to Green Belt in the neighbourhood area. In its response to the clarification note LMPC commented that:

*'This paragraph could be updated given the progress on the Buckinghamshire Local Plan, bearing in mind that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be made prior to the Local Plan being adopted by Bucks Council. Whilst designation (or strategic changes to the Green Belt boundary) of Green Belt is not a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan, the policy provides for protection of small-scale areas where development would have an adverse impact on the character of the Parish which we believe is a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan*

- 7.42 I have considered these matters very carefully and in the context of national policy relating to Green Belts. The policy seeks to complement the approach being taken by BC in its emerging Local Plan. In doing so BC is addressing the national policy for the Green Belt as set out in Section 13 of the NPPF. As part of this process BC is assessing the existing Green Belt boundary. It is also assessing the potential acceptability of sites for new housing development throughout the County. Plainly this exercise is being undertaken at a strategic level.
- 7.43 In this context the approach proposed by LMPC to identify buffer zones cuts across the ongoing strategic exercise in the emerging Local Plan. In addition, it does so without any clarity on the scale and extent (if any) of revisions to the Green Belt boundary in the parish. Furthermore, and as BC comment, the Green Belt boundaries in the neighbourhood area remain unaffected. Additionally, irrespective of whether the Green Belt boundaries in the parish remain or are altered, the proposed identification of the buffer zones in the submitted plan bring no added value beyond national Green Belt policy. Finally, some of the proposed designations are outside the neighbourhood area and cannot be included in the Plan.
- 7.44 In all the circumstances I recommend the deletion of the first part of the policy as it addresses strategic rather than neighbourhood plan issues.

- 7.45 I also recommend the deletion of the second part of the policy as it restates existing national and local planning policies.
- 7.46 I recommend the consequential deletion of the existing supporting text and its replacement with an explanation of the context in which BC is seeking to address Green Belt boundaries in the context of national advice in the NPPF.
- 7.47 The representation from Hawridge comments that the Plan should allocate land required for the northern access into the Tralee Farm site (in the adjacent Hazlemere neighbourhood area) to reflect its allocation in Policy HW8 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019. It also commented on the planning permission that existed on the site. I sought BC comments on the extent to which the development of that site is already underpinned by planning permissions. In its response it advised that:

*'In relation to planning permission 21/08364/FUL (southern parcel of the Tralee Farm allocation), the permission has been implemented and development is currently underway. Bellway Homes has commenced construction and a number of dwellings have been occupied on the frontage element of the scheme adjoining Amersham Road.*

*With regard to planning permission 23/05440/OUT (northern parcel), this is an outline permission and Reserved Matters approval relating to that permission was recently granted on 24 June 2026 under application reference PL/25/2286/DE.*

*The representation from Hawridge refer to Condition 4 of planning permission 23/05440/OUT, which requires development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, including plans showing the alignment of the northern access. As the northern parcel was granted in outline, implementation of the approved access arrangements first required the approval of Reserved Matters. Given that Reserved Matters approval has only recently been secured, the northern access has not yet been constructed.*

*The outline permission remains extant, and the developer has 18 months from the approval of the Reserved matters application to implement.'*

- 7.48 In these circumstances I am not persuaded that the Plan needs to allocate land for the northern access to the Tralee Farm development. Planning permission has been granted for the development of the site and BC has now approved the reserved matters on the outline application. In the same way that the submitted Plan would not need to allocate land for development within the neighbourhood area which has planning permission, there is no need for it to allocate land for the access into land outside the neighbourhood area which has planning permission. In addition, national legislation provides considerable flexibility to a qualifying body to determine what it includes within its Plan. However, for clarity I recommend that the supporting text highlights that the planning permission incorporates the northern access into the Tralee Farm development (which is within the neighbourhood area).

**Delete the policy.**

*Remove the proposed Strategic Buffer Zones and the Tralee Farm Strategic Gap from the Policies Maps*

*Delete paragraphs 10.3 to 10.12 and replace with:*

*'Separation between settlements*

*The Green Belt plays an important role within the neighbourhood area. In the broader context provided by the Metropolitan Green Belt it serves a series of purposes including checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another; and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.*

*Buckinghamshire Council has published the Regulation 19 version of the emerging Local Plan in July 2026. It proposes the allocation of a series of housing, employment and mixed-use allocations. It has also undertaken a detailed assessment of the role and function of the existing Green Belt based on the contents of the December 2024 version of the NPPF. Plainly this is a strategic matter and the Plan will be subject to its own examination in due course.*

*There is no need for this neighbourhood plan to repeat or restate the national or local approaches to the Green Belt. The Parish Council will monitor the progress of the Local Plan and, if necessary, consider the need for a full or a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan once the Local Plan has been adopted*

*Residential development is now taking place on the Tralee Farm site in the adjoining parish of Hazlemere. The northern access into that development is within the neighbourhood area.*

*Replace 10.13 with: 'Opportunities for new small scale housing development may continue to arise in the settlements throughout the plan period. These are likely to be infill or redevelopment of redundant sites or sites currently in other uses. Redundant sites and brownfield land should continue to be a priority over green field sites. Any such proposals will be determined on the basis of relevant development plan policies.'*

*Delete paragraph 10.14*

**SD2 High Quality Design**

- 7.49 This policy seeks to achieve and promote high quality sustainable design for new development which respects the character of the parish.
- 7.50 A Design Guidance and Code for the parish has been prepared as a separate technical background document to the Plan. It identifies four distinct character areas which correspond to the four main villages and are described in paragraph 10.17. The document then sets out a series of design codes organised under four overarching principles that are particularly relevant for development in the Parish as follows:
- landscape setting;
  - rural village;
  - local architecture; and

- sustainable futures.

- 7.51 Within each of the overarching principles, there are a set of Design Guidance and Codes, which apply to the whole Neighbourhood Area.
- 7.52 This is an excellent policy that is underpinned by the Design Guidance and Codes. The work on character areas is very distinctive. In the round the approach taken is a very positive local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. In this context I recommend that the second part of the policy is worded so that it can be applied in a proportionate way. This will acknowledge that several of the criteria listed in the policy will not directly apply to minor or domestic proposals. I also recommend that the policy uses wording more appropriate to a neighbourhood plan.
- 7.53 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace ‘All new development must:’ with ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:’**

#### SD3 Provision of Energy and Water Efficient Buildings

- 7.54 The policy sets out to ensure that the design and standard of new buildings meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for energy efficiency. It advises that sustainable energy production will generally be supported where there is no adverse impact on the rural environment. The Plan acknowledges that existing buildings can be retrofitted with features that contribute to energy, carbon and water efficiency.
- 7.55 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach which has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.
- 7.56 I note the comments on the proposed extension of the scope from CALA. However, such changes are not needed to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.57 I recommend a series of modifications clarify NPPF and to allow BC to apply the policy through the development management process:
- a revision to the wording in the third part of the policy; and
  - the inclusion of a proportionate element in the final part of the policy. This acknowledges that the water infrastructure will already exist in domestic properties which are subject to proposals for extensions.
- 7.58 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

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

**‘The retrofitting of existing buildings including heritage properties (including heritage assets) to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy will be supported where they safeguard the integrity of the buildings concerned, including any relevant historic characteristics.’**

**As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should be designed to respond positively to best practice in water efficiency, including the use of water efficient fittings and appliances, water harvesting and storage features.'**

SD4 New Housing Development

7.59 The policy seeks to ensure that smaller homes are included in the mix of housing on new development.

7.60 BC comments that:

*'We understand that the most up to date evidence base is the Local Housing Needs Assessment that has been published as part of the Reg 18 consultation in the emerging Local Plan and does not refer directly to Little Missenden, therefore significant weight cannot be given to it. Nevertheless, disregarding it entirely seems premature as there is strong evidence to suggest that the building of new affordable homes will help with the long-term sustainability of rural communities. The Neighbourhood Plan may benefit from inclusion of specific policies on the provision of affordable housing lower than the national threshold and/or on rural exception sites.'*

7.61 In its response to the clarification note, LMPC commented that:

*'If Buckinghamshire Council think a policy should be included regarding local targets for affordable housing, this could be included (with their guidance) when the Neighbourhood Plan is reviewed.'*

7.62 I understand the approach taken in the policy towards the delivery of smaller homes. However, paragraph 10.3 of the Plan acknowledges that there is no current detailed evidence available. On this basis I sought LMPC's comments about the extent to which appropriate evidence supports the policy. In its response to the clarification note LMPC commented that:

*'There is no specific local evidence to support this policy apart from the extremely expensive house prices in this area, particularly outside Holmer Green. However, the Executive Summary of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan Housing Needs Assessment Buckinghamshire Local Housing Needs Assessment shows that the Future Housing mix 2024- 2045 needs to be a larger number of smaller units (1 & 2 bedroom) as compared to 3+ bedroom units (45,034 vs 39,148).'*

7.63 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Sections 5 and 8 of the NPPF. I have considered its contents carefully. There is clearly a need for smaller houses to meet housing need. Nevertheless, given the lack of any detailed information I recommend that the policy is modified so that it acknowledges that its approach may not always be practicable and/or commercially viable.

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

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Wherever practicable and it is commercially viable to do so, development proposals of more than two houses should incorporate a mix of dwelling sizes, with a majority (over 50%) of 1–2-bedroom homes to provide for housing choice, including for younger people and older people wishing to downsize.’**

**LF1 Local facilities**

- 7.65 This policy promotes the protection of existing community facilities which are locally valued and increase community cohesion.
- 7.66 I looked carefully at the identified facilities. I am satisfied that they have been carefully chosen. In addition, the approach taken in the Plan has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF.
- 7.67 As submitted, the policy has a slightly jumbled order. I recommend that the policy is recast so that it identifies the facility, comments initially about their consolidation/extension and then comments about proposals which would result in their loss. I also recommend modifications to the wording used so that the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF and can be implemented by BC through the development management process.
- 7.68 The recast policy will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘The Plan identifies a series of local facilities in Annex 3.**

**Proposals to improve the viability or offer of an identified facility by way of the extension, replacement or redevelopment of buildings, structures and land will be supported where the design of the scheme respects the character of the parish, and the resulting increase in use is appropriate in design terms and will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of adjoining residential properties.**

**Proposals for the replacement of an identified facility in a different location should demonstrate that the new facility is an improvement on the old facility and is in a sustainable location to which local people have ready, safe and convenient access.**

**Development proposals which would result in either the loss of or significant harm to, the use of an identified facility will not be supported unless:**

- **it can be clearly demonstrated that the continued use of any of the facility concerned is no longer viable with evidence that the property has been actively marketed, commensurate with its use at an open market value for a period of at least 12 months; or**
- **the development proposal incorporates the delivery of the community facility elsewhere in the neighbourhood area**

**Proposals for the provision of new community facilities will be supported.'**

LF2 Recreation and Green Spaces

- 7.69 The Plan advises that the parish has a reasonable number of greenspaces of different types which range from formal equipped recreation grounds to sites that are protected by wildlife and/or common land designations. Responses to the questionnaire indicated that residents were satisfied or very satisfied with the provision of such green spaces.
- 7.70 The policy supports the development of new green space and looks to safeguard existing green spaces.
- 7.71 In general terms, the policy takes a positive approach to this issue and has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF. In this context I recommend that the policy is recast so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF and can be implemented by BC through the development management process. The recast policy will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**'The improvement of existing play facilities and green spaces both in terms of equipment and planting will be supported. The provision of additional green spaces and recreational facilities will also be supported.'**

**Development proposals which would reduce the size or the quality of existing open spaces, allotments and recreation facilities will only be supported where the existing facilities are re-provided to a better quality or quantity in an appropriate location.'**

LF3 Local Green Spaces

- 7.72 The policy proposes a series of Local Green Spaces (LGS). They are helpfully underpinned by the details in Annex 4. I looked at the proposed LGSs during the visit wherever it was practical to do so.
- 7.73 BC comments:
- 'As most of these sites are in the Green Belt, they already have the highest protection from development available. As an LGS designation just replicates the protection that GB has, for the reasons above, they may be seen as a duplication.'*
- 7.74 In its response to the clarification note LMPC commented that:
- 'All the designated LGS are important to the community and none should be deleted because they are in the Green Belt (this would leave only those within Holmer Green). As we know, the Green Belt is under review through the Local Plan which is not yet adopted.'*
- 7.75 The relationship between proposed LGSs and the Green Belt is neatly captured in Planning practice guidance as follows:

*'If land is already protected by Green Belt policy, or in London, policy on Metropolitan Open Land, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space. One potential benefit in areas where protection from development is the norm (for example villages included in the green belt) but where there could be exceptions is that the Local Green Space designation could help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community (Planning practice guidance ID: 37-010-20140306).'*

- 7.76 I have considered this matter carefully. Based on my own observations and the information in the Plan I am satisfied that most of the proposed LGSs meet the criteria for LGS as set out in sections 106 and 107 of the NPPF. In addition, I am satisfied that their designation would help to identify areas that are of particular importance to the local community in accordance with the commentary in Planning practice guidance.
- 7.77 However I am not satisfied that proposed LGS 35/36/37/38 and 148 are sufficiently distinctive to meet the requirement to be demonstrably special in accordance with paragraph 107b of the NPPF. In effect they are linear roadside green areas which, whilst pleasant, do not have the special characters enjoyed by the other proposed LGSs. As such I recommend that they are deleted from the relevant Policies Maps. Plainly they will continue to enjoy the current protection afforded by their location within the Green Belt.
- 7.78 I also recommend that the policy is simplified so that it follows the matter-of-fact approach taken in paragraph 108 of the NPPF.
- 7.79 I also recommend that Annex 4 is refined by referencing which LGSs are designated in the Plan and those which have been assessed and not included as LGSs in the Plan. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**'The spaces as shown on the Policies Maps are designated as Local Green Spaces.**

**Proposed development within the Local Green Spaces will not be supported except in very special circumstances.'**

*Delete LGS 35/36/37/38 and 148 from the relevant Policies Maps*

**LF4 Supporting Local Business and Agriculture**

- 7.80 This policy comments that new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses are supported in line with the NPPF principle of building a strong competitive economy.
- 7.81 BC comments that it welcomes the support for new and growing businesses, including farm-based operations.
- 7.82 The policy takes a positive response to Section 6 of the NPPF. In the first part of the policy, I recommend that 'encouraged' is replaced by 'supported' to provide clarity for the development management process. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic

conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**In the first part of the policy replace ‘encouraged’ with ‘supported’**

**TT1 Car Parking**

- 7.83 The policy seeks to ensure that sufficient car parking is provided for new developments and public parking is retained in line with BC standards.
- 7.84 BC suggest that the scope of the policy could be widened to address a series of accessibility issues. Their incorporation into the policy would extend its remit. However, this approach is not required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. In addition, the scope of a neighbourhood plan is at the discretion of the qualifying body.
- 7.85 I sought LMPC’s comments on the extent to which the policy brings any added value beyond that provided by national and local planning policies. In its response to the clarification note, it advised that:
- ‘(this) policy is important to the Parish given that congestion (often caused by parking) is a local issue, particularly in the context of Holmer Green where publicly accessible parking space allows access to local facilities which are not available in other settlements in the Parish and the wider area. This is explained in paragraphs 12.6 to 12.8, although reference could be inserted into the policy regarding Holmer Green.’*
- 7.86 I have considered LMPC’s response carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that there is added value based on local circumstances. However, in this broader context I recommend the following modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow BC to implement the policy through the development management process:
- the breaking of the first part of the policy into its constituent parts;
  - the breaking of the second part of the policy into its constituent parts (public/private parking); and
  - the deletion of the unnecessary third part of the policy and its relocation into the supporting text.
- 7.87 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the policy with:**

**‘Development proposals should provide parking in line with Buckinghamshire Council’s parking standards and have adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs, unless alternative and accessible car parking arrangements can be made which do not add to on-street congestion.**

**The provision of secure storage for cycles and other non-car vehicles such as mobility scooters will be supported.**

**Development proposals should not result in the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking.**

**Development proposals which propose to reduce the number of off-road parking spaces will only be supported where alternative provision is made which increases or maintains the number of accessible parking spaces available on the site concerned, or within its immediate vicinity.'**

*At the end of paragraph 12.8 add: 'Proposals for new development that provide additional off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion will be supported where they otherwise comply with development plan policies and result in good design.'*

TT2 Provision for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders

- 7.88 This policy advises that new development should provide pavements and improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- 7.89 BC suggest that the scope of the policy could be widened to address a series of accessibility issues. Their incorporation into the policy would extend its remit. However, this approach is not required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. In addition, the scope of a neighbourhood plan is at the discretion of the qualifying body.
- 7.90 I recommend that the opening element of the first part of the policy is modified so that it can be applied by BC on a proportionate basis. This acknowledges that minor and domestic proposals will have limited opportunities to trigger the implementation of the policy. I also recommend that the second part of the policy is recast so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF and can be applied by BC through the development management process.
- 7.91 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace the first sentence of the first part of the policy with: 'As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should include measures that keep traffic speeds low, prioritise safety, and improve the provision of pavements and access for pedestrians and cyclists and horse riders.'**

**Replace the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals should retain the rights of way network and pavements. Wherever practicable, development proposals should take opportunities to establish new links both within the villages, to neighbouring settlements, and to the wider countryside.'**

Other Matters – General

- 7.92 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 BC and LMPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

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

#### Other Matters – Specific

- 7.93 BC has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. I have included them in the recommended modifications on a policy-by-policy basis where they are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.94 I also recommend modifications to the text of the Plan based on BC's comments in the Heritage Team section to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. They relate mainly to Annex 2 of the Plan.

## 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 2039. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area and to designate a package of Local Green Spaces.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Little Missenden Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to Buckinghamshire Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Little Missenden Parish 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 on 4 October 2022.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth way.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**8 October 2026**