Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan

The Report by the Independent Examiner

Richard High BA MA MRTPI

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## Contents

Summary 5

Introduction 7

Appointment of Independent Examiner 7

The Scope of the Examination 8

The Preparation of the Plan 10

Public Consultation 11

The Development Plan 12

The Basic Conditions Test 13
  Compatibility with European Union Obligations 13
  Vision and Objectives 15

The Neighbourhood Plan Policies 15
  The Environment 16
  Community Facilities 20
  Transport, traffic management and connectivity 21
  Housing 23
  Housing allocations 26
  Employment and employment allocations 32
  Developer contributions 32

Monitoring and review 33

Summary and Referendum 33

Appendix 1 Agricultural Land Classification Map 35

Appendix 2 Extract from Minerals and Waste Plan 36
Summary

It is evident that the Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared carefully and thoroughly with extensive involvement of the local community and regard for the statutory requirements. As with many neighbourhood plans, the strategic context has been difficult in the absence of an up to date local plan, but the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has worked closely with the Borough Council of Wellingborough to ensure that the Plan is aligned with the emerging Joint Core Strategy.

I have found the documentation submitted with the Plan very concise clear and well presented. It covers the necessary ground without presenting an overwhelming body of information and provides helpful links to further background evidence. The policies and the reasoned justification are for the most part carefully phrased to meet the requirements of the basic conditions. This has facilitated my examination and the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in particular are to be congratulated on their efforts.

I have found it necessary to suggest some modifications to enable the Plan to meet the basic conditions and other legal requirements. In most cases these are relatively minor, but in one very significant area, the scale of development at Hookhams Path and the boundary of the allocation I have found the justification inadequate. However, I have been able to recommend modifications which are capable of overcoming this.

In some cases, the distinction between policy and supporting text, which should focus on justification and evidence to support the policy, is blurred by the amplification of policy requirements in supporting text. This has required recommendations to delete or modify several paragraphs.

I have concluded that, if the modifications that I have recommended are made:

The Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with Sections 38A and 38B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012;

having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it would be appropriate to make the Plan;

The making of the Plan would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;

The making of the Plan would be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
The making of the Plan would not breach and would be otherwise compatible with European Union obligations and the European Convention on Human Rights.

I am therefore pleased to recommend that the Wollaston Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to a referendum subject to the modifications that I have recommended.

I am also required to consider whether or not the referendum area should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The whole of the parish of Wollaston is included in the plan area together with a small part of the neighbouring parish of Strixton. The part of the plan area that lies within the parish of Strixton is closely related to Wollaston and Strixton Parish Meeting has raised no objection to the inclusion of this area. It has also not made any representations regarding the extent of the referendum area. I have seen nothing to suggest that the policies of the Plan will have “a substantial, direct and demonstrable impact beyond the neighbourhood area”. Therefore conclude that there is no need to extend the referendum area.
Introduction

1. The Localism Act 2011 has provided local communities with the opportunity to have a stronger say in their future by preparing neighbourhood plans which contain policies relating to the development and use of land.

2. Wollaston Parish Council is the accountable body for the Wollaston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 (which I shall refer to as the WNP or the Plan). The Plan area covers the whole of the parish of Wollaston and a small part of the neighbouring parish of Strixton. It has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) consisting of parish councillors and members of the public.

3. Wollaston is a large village which lies 4 miles south of the town of Wellingborough. Like many of the towns and villages in the vicinity it grew substantially in the nineteenth century as a centre for footwear manufacturing. This industry, while much reduced, remains significant today. More recently the village has experienced further phases of significant growth separated by periods of comparative stability. It has a population of about 3,700 and a range of services including primary and secondary schools, doctors’ surgeries and a small range of shops. It is also home to a substantial chemical manufacturing company, Scott Bader. The town is separated from Wellingborough by the Nene Valley much of which is designated as a Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site because of its international importance for over-wintering birds.

4. If, following a recommendation from this examination, the Plan proceeds to a local referendum and receives the support of over 50% of those voting, it can be made and will then form part of the statutory development plan. As such it will be an important consideration in the determination of planning applications, as these must be determined in accordance with development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Appointment of the Independent Examiner

5. I have been appointed by the Borough Council of Wellingborough with the agreement of Wollaston Parish Council (WPC) to carry out the independent examination of the WNP. I have been appointed through the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS).
6. I confirm that I am independent of both The Borough Council of Wellingborough and Wollaston Parish Council and have no interest in any land which is affected by the WNP.

7. I am a Chartered Town Planner with over 30 years’ experience in local government, working in a wide range of planning related roles, including 15 years as a chief officer. Since 2006 I have been an independent planning and regeneration consultant. I have completed 9 neighbourhood plan examinations and three health checks. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this examination.

**The Scope of the Examination**

8. The nature of the independent examination is set out in Sections 8-10 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

9. I must:

   a) decide whether the Plan complies with the provisions of Sections 38A and 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. These requirements relate primarily, but not exclusively, to the process of preparing the Plan and I shall deal with these first.

   b) decide whether the Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions contained in Schedule 4B paragraph 8(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This element of the examination relates mainly to the contents of the Plan.

   c) make a recommendation as to whether the Plan should be submitted to a referendum, with or without modifications, and whether the area for the referendum should extend beyond the Plan area.

10. The Plan meets the basic conditions if:

   a) having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the Plan;

   b) the making of the Plan contributes to sustainable development;
c) the making of the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);

d) the making of the Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

11. Paragraph 9 of Schedule 4B indicates that as a general rule the examination should be carried out on the basis of written representations unless a hearing is necessary to allow adequate consideration of an issue or to allow a person a fair chance to put a case. In carrying out the examination I came to the conclusion that the examination could be completed without a hearing.

12. The documents which I have referred to in the examination are listed below.

- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions Statement 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement September 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Determination Statement 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Equality Impact Statement September 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Housing Background Paper September 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space Background Paper July 2015
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Housing and Employment Sites Assessment Background Paper 2014 Update November 2014
- Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base. This document lists a large number of other documents that have been used in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, all of which are very helpfully referenced in the main and supporting documents. It is not necessary to list them all here, but I have referred to all of these documents to the extent that it has been necessary to do so.
- The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended in 2015 which are referred to as the NPR
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
- The National Planning Policy Framework which is referred to as the NPPF
- National Planning Practice Guidance referred to as PPG
- North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy 2008 (CSS)
• North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031. Focussed changes to the Pre-Submission Plan (JCS)
• Rural Housing Targets for Wellingborough’s Principal Villages 2014
• North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2011 update
• The Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2014
• The Agricultural Land Classification Map shown at Appendix 1

13. I made an unaccompanied visit to Wollaston on 4 March 2015 to familiarise myself with the village and help me to understand the implications of the Plan policies. I spent a full day walking round the village and its surroundings to view all the key locations referred to in the Plan.

The Preparation of the Plan

14. An application for the designation of the Neighbourhood Area was submitted by the Parish Council to the Borough Council on October 25th 2012. The area included the whole of the parish of Wollaston and a small part of the neighbouring parish of Strixton. The Wollaston and Strixton playing field on the southern edge of the village and a small part of the Hinwick Road Industrial Estate fall within the parish of Strixton, but are clearly closely related to the settlement of Wollaston. An e mail from Strixton Parish Meeting dated 26 September 2012 confirmed that it had no objection to the proposed boundary of the Neighbourhood Area. The Borough Council undertook consultation as required by the regulation 6 of the NPR and issued a notice confirming that the designation had been made on 9 January 2013.

15. As required under Section 38B (1) (a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Plan clearly states the period to which it relates, which is 2011-2031.

16. The Plan must not include any provision about development that is excluded development as defined in Section 61K, which is inserted into the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. Excluded development includes “county matters” such as mineral extraction and waste disposal and major infrastructure projects. I am satisfied that the submitted plan contains no such provision.
17. I am also satisfied that the WNP does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area.

Public Consultation

18. The preparation of the WNP has involved an extensive programme of public consultation and involvement. It is noteworthy that consultation was particularly extensive during the early stages of the preparation of the Plan and there were numerous events designed to make people aware of the process and to provide an opportunity to influence the Plan at an early stage. In addition to a formal launch meeting in April 2012, there was a Housing Needs Survey and there were initiatives targeted at older people, younger people and businesses to identify issues to be addressed. There was also a questionnaire and Draft Housing and Employment Sites Assessment Background Paper in November 2013. During this process the Parish Council published reports that summarised the outcome of the various stages of consultation including the results of the Housing Needs Survey (2012), The Issues Consultation Statement (June 2013) and Summary of Questionnaire Responses 2014. The Consultation Statement helpfully draws the issues that were identified in these early stages of consultation together and indicates how they were addressed in the Consultation Draft Plan.

19. Consultation on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan took place from 28 November 2014 to 19 January 2015. A copy of the Draft Plan was delivered by hand to all the homes and businesses in the Neighbourhood Area. The Plan and a Housing and Employment Sites Assessment Background Paper Update was posted on the Parish Council’s website and placed on deposit in the Wollaston Library. 4 drop in sessions were held during the consultation period and a wide range of public bodies, landowners and local organisations were also consulted. The Consultation Statement summarises the issues raised in the consultation and describes how they have been addressed in the submission plan. Appendix 1 sets out the representations received in more detail together with the Parish Council response and indicates whether a change to the Plan is required.

20. I am satisfied that the consultation that was undertaken clearly exceeds the requirements of regulation 14 of the NPR and that the Consultation Statement fully meets the requirements of Regulation 15 of the NPR.
The Development Plan

21. The statutory development plan is made up of:

- The 2008 adopted North Northamptonshire Core Strategy (CSS)

22. While the CSS is still in force, it does not provide a strategic context for the whole of the plan period of the WNP as its time horizon is 2020. The CSS is to be replaced by the emerging North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which was submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2015. The saved policies of the Borough of Wellingborough Local Plan will in due course be replaced by a new plan to be prepared by the Borough Council of Wellingborough but work on this is at an early stage. The Borough Council has indicated that the saved policies are not strategic. While the Plan cannot include policies for minerals and waste, the Minerals and Waste Plan is relevant because of the potential for conflict between the Plan’s proposals and policies to protect mineral resources.

23. The basic conditions simply require that neighbourhood plans are in “general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan”. The WNP is therefore not tested against the policies of the emerging plan. However, it is good practice for the qualifying body to work with the local planning authority to consider the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the policies of an emerging plan and to minimise any potential conflicts between a neighbourhood plan and an emerging plan. There is evidence of a close working relationship between WBC and the NPWG and the Basic Conditions Statement considers the policies of the WNP in relation to both the CSS and the emerging JCS.

24. In the absence of an up to date local plan the primary policy guidance for the Plan is the statement of national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supported by the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

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2 PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20140306
The Basic Conditions Test

25. The Basic Conditions Statement submitted with the Plan sets out the relationship of the Plan to the legal requirements, national policy as expressed in the core principles in the NPPF, sustainable development and strategic local policy. It cross refers to the conclusions of the separate report on the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment or an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations. It is a clearly presented document and I have had regard to it throughout my examination. It does not though explain the relationship between the WNP policies and the specific sections of the NPPF that are relevant, and I have sought to do this where necessary. There is also one detail to which I should draw attention. Paragraph 1.2 lists the basic conditions and incorrectly paraphrases the first one, by saying that “the Plan must: i) Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State”. The correct wording is set out in paragraph 10 of this report. The distinction is that the test is not whether the Plan has regard to national policies and guidance, but whether, having regard to national policies and guidance it is appropriate to make the Plan. The other basic conditions are also slightly incorrectly quoted by saying “The Plan must..” rather than if “the making of the plan..”

Recommendation

Amend paragraph 1.2 of the Basic Conditions Statement to correctly quote the basic conditions.

26. I shall consider the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to basic conditions a), b) and c) in relation to each of its policies but will first consider whether it meets European Union obligations.

European Union Obligations

27. Included with the submission documents is a statement which sets out a determination that neither a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations (HRA) is necessary. In each case this conclusion is reached following a screening assessment and consultation with the appropriate bodies.

28. In relation to SEA the screening assessment is set out following the guidance in Figure 2 of the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The assessment sets out factors which Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of
Programmes and Plans Regulations 2004 lists for consideration when determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. The table which addresses these effects does not refer explicitly to all of these factors, in particular it does not refer to the special characteristics of the area, notably the Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA. However, this matter is referred to in some detail in the Habitats Regulation Screening Assessment, and the response of Natural England to both assessments confirms the conclusion that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. The assessment does summarise the main effects of the Plan and cross refers to the Housing and Employment Sites Background Paper which evaluates the effects of all of the sites which were considered. All of the consultation bodies confirm the conclusion of the screening assessment that the Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and the conclusion to the Determination Statement sets out a summary of the reasons for this conclusion.\(^3\) I am therefore satisfied that the submitted Determination Statement fulfils the requirements of the EAPPR with regard to SEA.

29. With regard to the Habitat Regulations, the screening assessment sets out in some detail the characteristics of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. It also refers to the Nene Washes SPA and SAC east of Peterborough and concludes that this is too far away from Wollaston to be affected.\(^4\) In order to determine the likely effects of the Plan Natural England was consulted and confirmed that no further assessment would be required under the Habitat Regulations. Subsequently the Borough Council determined on the basis of this response that no further assessment would be necessary.

30. I am also satisfied that nothing in the WNP is in conflict with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights.

31. I therefore conclude that the WNP would not breach and would be otherwise compatible with EU obligations.

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\(^3\) There is a significant typographical error at the end of paragraph 4.8 of the SEA determination. The last sentence is unfinished as it ends “This conclusion is further supported by”. It has been clarified to me that this should read “This conclusion is further supported by the findings of the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England (see Appendix 2)”.

\(^4\) There is a further typographical error in paragraph 5.4 of the Habitats Regulations Assessment at the end of the third sentence “Wollaston” should be replaced by “Nene Washes SPA and SAC”.

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Vision and Objectives

32. The Plan sets out a Vision for Wollaston in 2031 and 10 objectives which, it is envisaged, the Plan will help to deliver. The Vision is a clear statement of the wish to retain a rural character for Wollaston. The objectives are phrased simply and each is linked to the policies which will help to deliver it. There is a clear distinction between the general intentions expressed in the objectives and the more specific nature of the policies. Both the Vision and the Objectives are entirely consistent with the basic conditions.

The Policies of the Plan

33. I have considered each of the policies having regard to the basic conditions. I will also have regard to the views expressed in response to public consultation both in the early stages of the preparation of the Plan and, in particular, in the responses to the regulation 16 consultation. However, I am only empowered to recommend modifications where they are necessary to enable the Plan to meet the basic conditions or to correct errors. PPG\(^5\) requires that policies should be “clear and unambiguous” and “drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications” and some modifications have been recommended with this in mind. Although I have not referred specifically to all the representations and suggestions that have been made I have taken them all into account.

34. For the most part the Policies are clearly presented and the supporting text provides justification and supporting evidence in an appropriate way. However, in some cases the supporting text is expressed in terms that make it read more like policy than reasoned justification. This tendency increases towards the later stages of the Plan. In some cases the detail that is given may be read as indicative of the sort of detailed consideration that the policy is designed to address. However, the use of wording such as “will”, “must” or “should” can, inappropriately, give the impression of a clear policy requirement. Supporting text does not carry the weight of the policy itself and can therefore only be treated as guidance to the decision maker. Where the wording

\(^5\) PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306
of supporting text gives a misleading indication that it should be regarded as policy I have suggested modifications to either reword it as reasoned justification or delete it.

35. The policies are presented under 7 main thematic headings and in each case key issues are identified which the policies seek to address. They are also illustrated in the Policies Map at Appendix 1. This is an integral and essential part of the Plan and should therefore be within the main body of the Plan.

Recommendation

In paragraph 4.1 delete “The Policies Map is included in Appendix 1” and delete Appendix 1. Insert the Policies Map after paragraph 4.3.

The Environment

Policy Env1. Gateways and focal points

36. This policy recognises the importance of the gateways to the village and the main focal points within it in defining local distinctiveness. It requires new development in these locations to enhance the quality and physical appearance of the public realm. The aim of the policy as described in the supporting text is entirely consistent with sustainable development. However, I have two minor concerns with the detailed wording. It will not always be reasonable or consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development for development to enhance appearance and in some circumstances it will be sufficient to maintain it. Also the wording of the policy relates only to the public realm, but it is clear from the supporting text that the intention is that it should also relate to buildings which surround it and this is necessary for the policy to be effective. I have therefore recommended minor modifications in the interests of sustainable development and clarity to reflect these points.

Recommendations

Modify the first part of Policy Env1 to read “Development at the following key gateways and focal points shown on the Policies Map should maintain or enhance the quality and physical appearance of the public realm and its setting”.

Policy Env2. Local Green Space

37. The Policy designates 15 areas as Local Green Space. The policy is supported by the Local Green Space Background Paper which evaluates 27 spaces which were considered for Local Green Space designation against criteria derived from paragraph 77 of the NPPF. This is a commendably thorough and systematic approach.
38. **1. Land off York Road** This is an undulating area of grassland and woodland on the edge of the village. It undoubtedly contributes to the rural character and setting of the village and I am satisfied that designation as Local Green Space is appropriate.

39. **2. Allotment Land off York Road** This area of allotments is adjacent to the previous area. In previous examinations I have not accepted the case for the designation of allotment land where it was not, in my view, demonstrably special. However, in this instance the land is as much open space as allotment land as it is not intensively used and offers the opportunity of public access to a tranquil area with extensive views over the countryside. I am satisfied that it meets the criteria for Local Green Space.

40. **3. Amenity Area Neale Close** This is a relatively small area of amenity space within a large residential area where there is little open space. It is an attractive space with some mature trees and is clearly special for the community it serves. It is therefore appropriate for Local Green Space designation.

41. **4. Wollaston Cemetery Cobbs Lane** The cemetery is a large area occupying a commanding position on relatively high ground. It offers tranquillity, public access and attractive views and is therefore appropriate as a Local Green Space.

42. **5. Grounds of The Priory, Hickmire** This is the extensive garden of a private dwelling close to the centre of the village. While there is no requirement for Local Green Spaces to be publicly accessible, it is very unusual for such a private garden to be so designated. I accept that it makes an important contribution to the character of the village, but this could be said of many large private gardens in central locations. The garden already enjoys significant protection from its location within the Conservation Area, and the listed status of the Priory. The NPPF makes it clear that Local Green Space designation will not be applicable for most green areas. While the grounds of The Priory are partly visible from the road, they are fairly well screened. In my judgement, the protection they already enjoy is sufficient and I am not satisfied that it is necessary or appropriate for it to be designated as Local Green Space.

43. **6. Grounds of St Mary’s Church Hickmire** The grounds of the church in the centre of the village are an important space in the village and appropriate for designation as Local Green Space.

44. **7. Wollaston House Parkland south of Cobbs Lane** Like the grounds of the Priory this is land in private ownership which is not publicly accessible and I note that the owner of the land has objected to the designation as Local Green Space. However, there are
in my view several significant differences. This area has the character of landscaped parkland rather than a private garden and it is a significant feature in the approach to Wollaston from the A509 both along both Cobbs Lane and London Road. The site is an important contributor to the local distinctiveness of Wollaston because of its prominent position and visibility. Part of the site is in the Nene Valley Improvement Area. I note the examples quoted from other neighbourhood plans where proposed Local Green Spaces have been rejected. However, this is essentially a local matter where individual sites must be assessed against the criteria and I cannot compare the circumstances directly with those elsewhere. I am satisfied that designation of this site as a Local Green Space is appropriate.

45. **8. Congregational Cemetery** I was unable to visit this site when I carried out my site visit because, as far as I could see, access is through Beacon Hill which was not open at any time when I passed the entrance. From the evaluation in the Local Green Space Background Paper and the limited view available through Google Maps it appears to me that this site meets the criteria for Local Green Space designation.

46. **9. Wollaston Pocket Park** This small park off Bell End is an attractively landscaped small park in the centre of the village. Its south-westerly aspect makes it a sheltered sun trap that I greatly appreciated on a chilly day, while I organised my route during my site visit. I am quite satisfied that it is appropriate for Local Green Space designation.

47. **10. Wollaston Primary School Land fronting South Street** The school playing field is in the centre of the village and is clearly a focal point with a great deal of potential for community events. It is an appropriate Local Green Space.

48. **11. Play Area St Mary’s Road, 12. Amenity Area the Pyghtles, 13. Play Area the Pyghtles** All three of these areas are small spaces which provide valuable and attractive amenity space serving residential areas in the southern part of the village. I am satisfied that in terms of their quality and their significance for the community they serve they meet the criteria for Local Green Space designation.

49. **14. Allotment Land south of the Pyghtles/Briarwood Way** This is a very large area of allotments on the southern side of the village. It occupies a sloping site that provides attractive views over the countryside and I am satisfied that it is sufficiently “special” in its character to justify Local Green Space Designation.

50. **15. Wollaston and Strixton Playing Field** While this site is slightly detached from the village it is sufficiently near to it to be considered close to the community it serves.
The playing field is served by a car park and is home to Wollaston Cricket Club. There is a substantial pavilion on the site and a small children's play area in the north-east corner. This playing field complex is clearly an important and attractive facility for the village and is an appropriate Local Green Space.

51. The NPSG is to be congratulated on the systematic evaluation of a large number of sites against the criteria in the NPPF which has resulted in the selection of a relatively large number of spaces for Local Green Space designation.

Recommendation:
In Policy Env2. Delete “5. Grounds of The Priory: Hickmire” and renumber the rest of the list of Local Green spaces. Also delete the site from the Policies Map.

Policy ENV3. Local Heritage Assets

52. The Policy sets out criteria for development which affects non-designated local heritage assets. The criteria are similar to the approach to designated heritage assets set out in the NPPF. However, the NPPF suggests that there should be a balanced approach to applications that affect non-designated heritage assets having regard to the scale of harm or loss. I have therefore recommended some minor modifications to reflect this more proportionate approach. As currently expressed there is a conflict between part 1 of the policy which requires development to ensure the conservation of an asset and part 2 which deals with the approach to be taken where there is some loss to the asset. The minor change to the order of the wording that I have suggested would rectify that.

53. Part of the supporting text in Paragraph 4.14 is expressed as a policy and I have suggested a modification to redress this.

54. I found the intention and wording of Part 3b of the Policy very difficult to follow and I have suggested revised wording for clarification.

55. In relation to this policy and many others the Plan highlights supporting action that the Parish Council will take to support the policy. This clearly differentiates such supporting action from the policy itself and this is a very helpful approach to demonstrate the wider application of the Plan and the continuing involvement of the community in its implementation.

Recommendations
In the supporting text Paragraph 4.14 delete “a marketing report will be required to demonstrate that all reasonable efforts to sell or let it at a market price for at least 12 months have been made” and replace with “a marketing report
explaining the measures that have been taken to sell or let it at a market price may provide acceptable evidence”

In Policy Env3.1b delete “where possible” from the end of the sentence and insert it after “ensure that” so that it clearly applies to both the conservation and the enhancement of the assets.

In Policy Env3.3 replace “provide” with “ensure” at the end of the first sentence,
In Policy Env3.3 a. delete “for” at the beginning of the sentence.
Modify Policy Env3.3 b. to read “that any loss does not take place until after the new development has commenced, or where this is not possible immediately before it commences.”

Community Facilities
Policy CF1. The protection of community facilities

56. The policy aims to protect existing community facilities unless they can be satisfactorily replaced or are demonstrated to be unviable. The range of community facilities in settlements of this scale is crucial to their vitality and sustainability and it is evident that the proximity to Wellingborough and other towns poses a challenge to the viability of some facilities. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. The last part of the supporting evidence in paragraph 4.19 reads as policy and should be deleted.

Recommendation
In paragraph 4.19 delete the last two sentences.

Policy CF2. Primary School provision

57. The capacity of the Primary School and the potential to expand it to serve new development is clearly a very important issue for the neighbourhood plan and a study to assess this was underway at the time the Plan was submitted. This policy aims to ensure that residential development does not take place in Wollaston unless there is sufficient capacity at the Primary School in the village or elsewhere in the village. I am satisfied that the intention of the policy is consistent with the basic conditions as it would not be sustainable for children to have to travel out of a settlement of the size of Wollaston for primary education.

58. Read in isolation the policy appears to imply that primary school capacity is the only requirement for residential planning permission. That is clearly not the case and I have suggested a modification which will make it clear that primary school capacity is necessary, but not necessarily sufficient for planning permission.
Rcommendation
Reword the first part of Policy CF2 to read “Subject to other development plan policies planning permission will be granted…”

Policy CF3. The provision of new community facilities
59. This policy aims to support the provision of new community facilities where they meet criteria relating to traffic generation, parking, scale and access. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions.

Transport, traffic management and connectivity
60. As in many places, particularly large villages and small towns, where the historic street pattern cannot easily be adapted to modern traffic conditions, traffic and parking issues generate a large amount of public concern.

Policy T1 The loss of existing parking provision
61. The policy seeks to resist the loss of existing on street parking unless it is not needed or suitable replacement facilities can be provided. It is consistent with the basic conditions.
62. Paragraph 4.39 and 4.40 of the supporting text are expressed as detailed policy requirements and I have suggested an appropriate modification.

Recommendation
Reword the first part of paragraph 4.39 of the supporting text to read “The evidence required to satisfy Policy T1 is likely to include an appropriate assessment of the number and usage level of on and off-street parking spaces over an extended period. The highway authority has advised that parking levels are normally considered …”
Delete Paragraph 4.40 as it largely repeats the policy.
Reword Policy T1. 2 to read “replacement car parking spaces, normally equal to the number lost and conveniently located having regard to the needs of users and highway safety, will be provided elsewhere”.

Policy T2. Residential parking in new developments
63. The policy sets out the approach to be taken when considering parking provision for new residential developments. It is linked to policies applied by Northamptonshire
County Council and provides for a flexible approach which does not set out rigid standards. This is commendable but the first two criteria are phrased somewhat imprecisely and thus it would not be easy to determine whether they have been met. Greater clarity would be achieved by linking the first criterion more explicitly to the approach set out in the first paragraph. As currently worded, the second criterion could be used to preclude any development with on street parking. This would not be consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development or paragraph 32 of the NPPF which makes it clear that transport arguments should only preclude developments “where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe”. I have therefore recommended modifications which address these issues.

Recommendations

In the first line of Policy T2 delete “level of” and insert “need for”.
Modify T2 1. to read “Provide sufficient parking to meet the assessed need”.
Modify T2 2. To read “ensure that any additional on street parking does not result in significant congestion for other road users or a serious threat to road safety”.

Policy T3. Improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities

64. This is a policy which is intended to support the improvement of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The intentions of the policy are clearly aligned with paragraph 34 of the NPPF. The policy is expressed in a way which acknowledges that the Plan cannot control whether some of the desired initiatives, such as a dedicated cycle route between Wollaston and Irchester can be delivered. The phrase “key destinations” suggests that these have been defined, but they are not named in the policy. I have therefore suggested a minor modification to include those named in the supporting text.

Recommendation

Modify Policy T3.3 to read “cycle parking at important destinations within the Plan area including the London Road recreation ground and the Co-operative car park in Newton Road.”

Policy T4. Superfast broadband

65. Policy T4 aims to ensure that new residential development is capable of receiving superfast broadband by fibre-optic cable into the premises; it accords with paragraph 43 of the NPPF. Rather like Policy CF2 it is phrased in a way that suggests that this is the only requirement for new housing development. I have therefore suggested an
amendment to make it clear that this is a requirement to be attached to a permission, rather than the key determinant of permission.

**Recommendation**

**Modify Policy T4 to read** “Planning permissions for new residential developments will be subject to a condition requiring the provision of ducting to allow for the provision of fibre optic cable into each new home”.

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**Housing**

**Policy H1. Number of new homes**

66. The amount of new housing to be provided is a key issue for neighbourhood plans. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF requires that “Neighbourhood Plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic priorities”. The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) is not up to date as its planning horizon is only 2020 and it does not identify a specific number of houses for Wollaston. The emphasis within the strategy is for the provision of the bulk of new housing in sustainable urban extensions to Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby. This strategic direction is maintained in the submission version of the emerging North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which proposes the provision of 160 dwellings in Wollaston. This is based on an approach for the major villages which aims to meet locally assessed need.

67. The Housing Background Paper describes in some detail how the amount of housing to be accommodated has been determined and it is clear that the NPSG has worked closely with the Borough Council and the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (NNJPU) on this issue. This is good practice which accords with Planning Practice Guidance. This assessment is based on local needs in accordance with the adopted Core Strategy, taking account of natural increase in the local population, the housing needs register, housing potential, past building rates and environmental factors. As a result of this the Borough Council/NNJPU has suggested that the WNP should plan for 160 new homes between 2011 and 2031. Policy H1 states that provision will be made for 160 new homes within the village boundary and that additional provision may be made on small sites within the Village Boundary in accordance with Policy H5 and on rural exception sites outside the Village Boundary.

68. Some of the representations received in response to the regulation 16 publicity of the submitted plan raise concerns that the amount of development proposed is too great...
for the village because of limits to the capacity of infrastructure and services such as the primary school and the doctor’s surgery. The potential to expand the primary school is still being assessed and the policies take account of the need for sufficient primary school places to accommodate the development. However, I have seen no clear evidence to demonstrate that this relatively modest scale of development in relation to the size of the village would be unsustainable. Moreover, any reduction in the scale of development proposed could mean that the Plan would quickly become out of date when the emerging JCS is adopted.

69. Table H1 which does not form part of the policy indicates how it is envisaged the 160 dwellings will be provided. Commitments and new allocations, which I consider later, make up 122 dwellings leaving 38 dwellings to be provided through windfall sites. This implies a significantly lower rate of provision on windfall sites than in recent years. However, as the Plan notes they are a finite resource and I have some doubt as to whether this number of sites will come forward in the plan period. Wollaston is a fairly compact village and there are relatively few obvious potential windfall sites within the built up area, if residential gardens are excluded as required by the NPPF, unless there are significant changes from employment to residential use. While additional sites could in theory come forward as exception sites or windfall sites, there is no certainty about this, particularly as Policy H5 effectively relates to windfall sites and will only allow for additional dwellings when the 38 envisaged here have been provided.

70. Notwithstanding these concerns, in the absence of an up to date adopted development plan I have no reason to question the compliance of this level of provision with the basic conditions. The Plan provision is also aligned with the scale of development envisaged by the emerging JCS. This document has now reached an advanced stage with the publication following examination of proposed major modifications and no modifications have been recommended to the proposed amount of growth for Wollaston. If my concerns regarding the rate at which windfall sites come forward are realised the Plan may cease to be consistent with the JCS when it is adopted. However, I am not required to assess the compliance with the emerging plan and I am satisfied that Policy H1 is, at this stage consistent with the basic conditions.

**Policy H2. The Housing Mix**

71. This policy provides guidance on how the mix of dwelling types in new residential developments should be determined. It refers to the character of surrounding development, evidence of the housing needs of the population and an emphasis on
housing for the elderly on sites close to services and facilities. The supporting text refers to the particular need for smaller dwellings identified in the 2012 Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Rural Housing Survey, but clearly this may change over the plan period and the more open wording of the policy will accommodate this. I am satisfied that the policy accords with the approach in paragraph 50 of the NPPF and satisfies the basic conditions.

**Policy H3. Affordable housing**

72. The policy sets out the approach to the provision of affordable housing. It leaves the amount and type of affordable housing to be determined by the local planning authority. The second part of the policy aims to ensure that affordable housing is integrated within housing developments so that it is visually indistinguishable from the equivalent market housing. However, the requirement for it to be scattered throughout the development as individual units may well not be achievable as it is often not an acceptable management arrangement for housing associations. It would not be consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development to resist the distribution of affordable housing in small groups.

73. The third element of the policy provides for commuted payments for the off-site provision of social housing where it would provide equivalent provision within the Plan Area is consistent with the basic conditions.

74. The final element seeks to ensure that nomination agreements for affordable housing give priority to people with a connection to the Plan Area. This is in accordance with the Borough Council’s housing allocations policy which is set out in detail in the supporting text. This is consistent with the basic conditions.

**Recommendation**

Amend the second sentence of the second paragraph of Policy H3 to read “The affordable housing should be provided as individual units or small clusters scattered throughout the development.”

**Policy H4 – Rural exception sites**

75. This policy provides for the development of affordable housing, possibly with an element of market housing on sites outside but adjoining the village boundary where it is justified by evidence of need from local people. This is consistent with the approach advocated in paragraph 54 of the NPPF. In such cases the policy aims to ensure by the use of legal agreements that the houses so provided remain available and
affordable for local people in perpetuity. I am satisfied that at the time of writing the policy is consistent with the basic conditions.⁶

**Policy H5. Small sites**

76. Policy H5 sets out criteria for the development of sites for small scale residential development within the Village Boundary. The criteria relate to the appearance of the development, the relationship with neighbouring properties and their occupiers, access and parking. In essence this policy relates to windfall sites which are relied on to make up 38 of the 160 dwellings which are proposed for the plan period. To this extent the suggestion in Policy H1 that Policy H5 may allow development in excess of 160 dwellings will only be true when the full allowance for windfall sites has been used up.

77. Paragraphs 4.74 to 4.77 are expressed in policy terms. They essentially amplify the broad criteria set out in Policy H5 but they do so in a more prescriptive and detailed way. This gives the impression that for the policy to be met they must be complied with. As the supporting text does not have the status of policy this is misleading. It would have been possible to include some of these specific requirements within the policy, but I am only able to suggest modifications that are necessary to meet the basic conditions and the requirements of these paragraphs are not necessary to do that.

**Recommendation**

Delete paragraphs 4.74 to 4.77

**Housing Allocations**

**Policy HA1. Land East of Hookhams Path**

78. This is the main allocation for new housing development in Wollaston. The policy proposes the development of the site of about 4ha to the east of Hookhams Path for the development of 80 houses.

79. The selection of the site is based on a site assessment process which compares 8 sites on the basis of 22 criteria which is set out in the Housing and Employment Sites Assessment Background Paper. The assessment uses a traffic light system rather than a numerical scoring system; where green signifies no constraints, yellow slight

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⁶ The Housing and Planning Bill proposes the extension of the Right to Buy discount to tenants of Housing Associations. The Bill is subject to amendment before it is enacted and at the present time it is not clear to me whether, when it becomes law, it will remove the ability to ensure that houses on exception sites can be required to remain affordable and available to local people in perpetuity.
constraints capable of mitigation, amber significant constraints which should be capable of mitigation and red significant effects not capable of mitigation. This site appraisal process is broadly compatible with the approach suggested in PPG7.

80. The selection of the criteria has drawn on earlier work by the Borough Council in the Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and Site Selection 2010. None of the larger sites that are evaluated are entirely free of constraints. The only red indicator on the Hookhams Path Site (referred to as site E) relates to the effect on high quality agricultural land. However, this constraint also applies to two of the other large sites: site C West of Irchester Road and Site D South of London Road. On request I have been supplied with the agricultural land quality map which is attached as Appendix 1. This shows that the area allocated in Policy HA1 is Grade 3 agricultural land bordering grade 2 land to the east. The classification within Grade 3 is not shown. The other large site – site F – is detached from the existing built up area and is affected by several other significant constraints.

81. A further constraint affecting the site is that it lies within a Minerals Protection Area identified in the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2014 (NMWP). A plan showing the Minerals Protection Area and Policy 32 of the NMWP are shown as Appendix 2. This constraint is not considered in any detail in the assessment but I need to have regard to it as it could mean that Policy HA1 is in conflict with a strategic development plan policy.

82. Policy 32 of the NMWP aims to protect mineral resources of economic importance from sterilisation by incompatible development. It sets out criteria to be met by development not related to minerals in Mineral Safeguarding Areas. These include it being demonstrated that the mineral is no longer of value or the extraction of the mineral prior to development or there being an overriding need for the development. I have no definite information on which to base an assessment against these criteria. However, there has been no objection from Northamptonshire County Council, the minerals authority, to the allocation at Hookhams Path. The allocation would only affect a relatively small part of the Minerals Protection Area, moreover, the proximity of the site to existing residential development and the school may well be significant constraints for any future mineral extraction. If extraction of some or all of the minerals was considered essential, it could take place prior to development. While there is clearly an element of conflict with the NMWP in this allocation, I am satisfied from the absence of a strategic objection, the potential for mitigating the loss of resources and

PPG Reference ID 41-042-20140306
the scale and location of the proposed development that the allocation is compatible with the basic conditions requirement for "general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan" with respect to the Minerals Protection Area.

83. The Site Assessment document then carefully compares sites C and E where the constraints assessment is similar. It concludes clearly in favour of site E on the basis of its accessibility to the existing village and the preference of the Highway Authority and electricity infrastructure provider. Moreover, part of Site C would be affected by its proximity to the notifiable installation at the Scott Bader chemical plant. I have noted concern that a further site to the east of Irchester Road was omitted from the evaluation (site WO17 in the Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and Site Selection 2010). However, I am satisfied that this site would be too detached from the existing village to be sustainable.

84. Many of the representations received in response to the regulation 16 publicity of the submitted plan relate to the proposed allocation East of Hookhams Path and many are from residents who live near to the site. Concerns expressed relate to traffic, and in particular the effect on Hookhams Path of additional traffic, having regard to the existing industrial traffic from the Hinwick Road employment area and the Santa Pod Raceway. Congestion at the junction of Hookhams Path and Irchester Road associated with the Secondary School on Irchester Road is also a concern. Some respondents also refer to the effect on high quality agricultural land and the capacity of the primary school and doctor’s surgery. The site assessment process does not suggest that any of the other sites considered would have a clear advantage over the Hookhams Lane site with regard to these concerns and there is no clear evidence to suggest that the proposed allocation would have significant harmful effects.

85. When I visited Wollaston I did look at traffic conditions on Hookhams Path and at Irchester Road junction at 3pm when the school day ended. I noted some use of Hookhams Path by heavy goods vehicles, and it is true that the Hinwick Road employment area is not well related to the major roads, particularly the A509. There was extensive parking on Hookhams Path and to a greater extent on Irchester Road just before the students came out of the school, but there were no major hold ups and the period of increased traffic was very short as almost all the parked cars had gone by 3.10pm. The additional traffic generated by the number of homes proposed would only add marginally to traffic levels and the suggested site C on Irchester Road would have a similar effect.
86. While there were several objections to the allocation of the Hookhams Path site, the site received the greatest support of the alternatives considered in the questionnaire in 2013.

87. I am satisfied that the selection of the site at Hookhams Path as the main allocation for residential development is consistent with sustainable development and the other basic conditions. I do, however, have some concerns about the precision of the policy regarding the amount of development and the rationale for the boundary. The policy refers to 80 dwellings precisely. I have already commented on the dependence of the Plan on windfall sites to achieve the requirement for 160 dwellings. A shortfall in the number of windfall sites would necessitate additional allocations or a higher number of dwellings on this site if the housing requirement for Wollaston in the emerging JCS is maintained. In the absence of any detailed design work I can find no reason for not allowing some flexibility to accommodate a somewhat higher number of houses. The sole reason for the specific number of dwellings appears to be to keep the number of houses to the minimum required. This reflects the wish of many respondents to the draft plan. However, there is a tension between this wish and the presumption in favour of sustainable development which is the fundamental theme running through the NPPF. More specifically the definition of a precise cap on the scale of development is not consistent with the requirements of paragraph 16 of the NPPF with regard to the requirement to “plan positively to support local development ...”.

88. Policy HA1 identifies several contributions to community facilities and infrastructure development for which contributions will be sought from the proposed development at Hookhams Path. I note the concern of the landowner that these contributions may not be compatible with a viable development. Any contributions will of course be subject to the statutory requirements for planning obligations,8 and, when it is introduced, the Community Infrastructure Levy. These are referred to in the supporting text to Policy DC1 and I have recommended a modification to Policy HA1 to make this clear. While I have no evidence to suggest that the development of the Hookhams Path site is not viable, it is also not clear whether all these contributions can be justified and funded from a development of 80 dwellings. It is possible for instance that the most sustainable solution for the village may be a somewhat larger number of dwellings which could support a greater contribution towards the facilities that are sought.

89. There is also no explicit justification for the boundary which has been chosen for the allocation. The implication is that it has been defined on the basis that it is large

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8 NPPF paragraph 204
enough to accommodate the 80 dwellings proposed and no more. This again results in a tension with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The allocation forms part of a large field and there are no obvious physical features which justify the eastern and southern boundaries. The site which was evaluated in the Housing and Employment Sites Background Paper⁹ and which received most support from those responding was significantly larger than the one shown on the Policies Map. It was roughly triangular and extended further east on the northern boundary and further south to the junction of Hookhams Path with Hinwick Road. The site which was evaluated in the Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and Site Selection 2010 was larger again, covering the whole of the field and was approximately twice as big as the site which is proposed.¹⁰ The eastern boundary appears to approximately coincide with the division between Grade 3 and Grade 2 agricultural land and it is possible that this and the minerals protection area are reasons for limiting the scale of development, but this is not made explicit and does not in my judgement preclude rather more flexibility in the policy than is implied by the present wording.

90. In the absence of any clear rationale for the limitation of the number of dwellings and the definition of the boundary it is necessary for me to suggest amendments to meet the basic conditions having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

91. The Policy sets out several detailed requirements for the development of the site. These relate to the provision of children’s play space, 2ha of community woodland, contributions to the provision of sports facilities and the village hall and several design guidelines relating to trees and boundaries, landscaping, green spaces, mitigating traffic impact and pedestrian access. Subject to the legal qualifications relating to planning obligations which I have referred to I am satisfied that these are consistent with the basic conditions.

92. The supporting text provides useful background evidence but again strays into making specific requirements which are not expressed in the policy itself. The scale of the proposed play area in Paragraph 4.81 is not supported by any evidence. The requirement for the outdoor fitness area in the second part of the paragraph could be linked to the evidence of consultation referred to in the Consultation Statement P33. Much of paragraph 4.85 is also expressed as policy. It also states that the

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⁹ Housing and Employment Sites Background Paper Appendix 1
¹⁰ Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and Site Selection 2010 Appendix 4.
comprehensive scheme will be prepared with the involvement of the local community. While this is clearly good practice in accordance with paragraph 66 of the NPPF, it cannot be required. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF makes it clear that local planning authorities cannot require pre-application consultation and there is no reason to believe that qualifying bodies could impose such a requirement.

Recommendations
In Policy HA1. 1 insert “approximately and no less than” before “80 dwellings. At the beginning of Policy HA1.4 insert “Detailed proposals including the precise quantity of development and the southern and eastern boundaries will be determined by a comprehensive scheme which should include:”
In Policy HA1.3 insert “Where the statutory requirements are met” before “Developer contributions…”
Amend the policies map to show the southern and eastern boundaries with a dotted line and an annotation to say “boundary to be determined by comprehensive proposals”.
In the supporting text:
Delete the second sentence of paragraph 4.81 and amend the third sentence to read “The response to consultation in the early stages of the plan preparation indicated a need for outdoor recreation facilities including a fitness area.”
Amend the beginning of paragraph 4.85 to read “The Parish Council would welcome its involvement along with the local community, neighbouring residents and other organisation in the development of comprehensive proposals for the development. Policy HA1 includes…”

Policy HA2 196 Hinwick Road
93. This policy identifies the site of a house with a large garden on the southern side of Hinwick Road for small scale residential development. Subject to minor rewording of paragraph 4.90 to distinguish it from policy I am satisfied that it is consistent with the basic conditions.

Recommendation
Amend the first part of paragraph 4.90 to read “The site is considered suitable for a low density development of one or two dwellings fronting Hinwick Road…..”
**Policy HA3. 190 Hinwick Road**

94. 190 Hinwick Road is adjacent to 196 Hinwick Road and is currently occupied by a landscape contractor and is identified for the development of one or two dwellings. Again, subject to amendment of paragraph 4.93 to distinguish it from policy, I am satisfied that this allocation is consistent with the basic conditions.

95. The identification of these two small sites for specific allocation is a further indication that the potential for windfall sites within Wollaston may be somewhat limited. Sites of this size might in normal circumstances be expected to come forward as windfall sites rather than formal allocation.

**Recommendation**

**Amend the beginning of paragraph 4.93 to read “The site is considered to be suitable for a low density development of one or two dwellings…”**

**Employment and employment allocations**

**Policy E1 Land adjacent and to the rear of the Recycling Centre, Doddington Rd.**

96. The policy allocates an area of approximately 2.5ha. for employment development. The site is detached from the village itself, but would form a continuation of employment uses along Doddington Road. The supporting text identifies some constraints which will need to be taken into account in detailed proposals, notably potential flood risk, the proximity of the site to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and possible contamination. However, there is no indication that these will prevent the development of the site. The policy sets out eight criteria which development proposals will need to address. The policy satisfies the basic conditions.

**Development Contributions**

**Policy DC1 Developer Contributions**

97. The policy identifies the projects for the provision of community infrastructure to which funding secured through planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy will be allocated. The projects are not listed in priority order and in relation to planning obligations funding will only be available if the agreement meets the legal requirements to which I have already referred. The policy meets the basic conditions.
**Monitoring and Review**

98. The final section of the Plan identifies targets and indicators for the monitoring of the Plan and refers to the need to review the Plan periodically. This is good practice.

**Summary and Referendum**

99. It is evident that the Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared carefully and thoroughly with extensive involvement of the local community and regard for the statutory requirements. As with many neighbourhood plans, the strategic context has been difficult in the absence of an up to date local plan, but the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has worked closely with the Borough Council of Wellingborough to ensure that the Plan is aligned with the emerging Joint Core Strategy.

100. I have found the documentation submitted with the Plan very concise clear and well presented. It covers the necessary ground without presenting an overwhelming body of information and provides helpful links to further background evidence. The policies and the reasoned justification are for the most part carefully phrased to meet the requirements of the basic conditions. This has facilitated my examination and the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in particular are to be congratulated on their efforts.

101. I have found it necessary to suggest some modifications to enable the Plan to meet the basic conditions and other legal requirements. In most cases these are relatively minor, but in one very significant area, the scale of development at Hookhams Path and the boundary of the allocation I have found the justification inadequate. However, I have been able to recommend modifications which are capable of overcoming this.

102. In some cases, the distinction between policy and supporting text, which should focus on justification and evidence to support the policy, is blurred by the amplification of policy requirements in supporting text. This has required recommendations to delete or modify several paragraphs.

103. I have concluded that, if the modifications that I have recommended are made:

The Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with Sections 38A and 38B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012;
Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it would be appropriate to make the Plan;

The making of the Plan would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;

The making of the Plan would be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;

The Plan would not breach and would be otherwise compatible with European Union obligations and the European Convention on Human Rights.

104. **I am therefore pleased to recommend that the Wollaston Development Plan should proceed to a referendum subject to the modifications that I have recommended.**

105. I am also required to consider whether or not the referendum area should extend beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The whole of the parish of Wollaston is included in the plan area together with a small part of the neighbouring parish of Strixton. The part of the plan area that lies within the parish of Strixton is closely related to Wollaston and Strixton Parish Meeting has raised no objection to the inclusion of this area. They have also not made any representations regarding the extent of the referendum area. I have seen nothing to suggest that the policies of the Plan will have "a substantial, direct and demonstrable impact beyond the neighbourhood area". ¹¹ **I therefore conclude that there is no need to extend the referendum area.**

Richard High 4 April 2016

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¹¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-059-20140306
Appendix 1 Agricultural Land Classification
Appendix 2 Extract from Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Plan

Policy 32:

Minerals Safeguarding Areas

Mineral resources of economic importance will be safeguarded from sterilisation by incompatible non-mineral development through the designation of Minerals Safeguarding Areas.

Development of a significant nature within Minerals Safeguarding Areas will have to demonstrate that the sterilisation of proven mineral resources of economic importance will not occur as a result of the development, and that the development would not pose a serious hindrance to future extraction in the vicinity. If this cannot be demonstrated, prior extraction will be sought where practicable.

Development of a non-mineral related nature within the Mineral Safeguarding Areas which is incompatible with the safeguarding of minerals should not proceed unless:

- it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Mineral Planning Authority that the mineral concerned is no longer of any value, or potential value, or that substantial (economically viable) deposits of a similar quality exist elsewhere in the county, or
• the mineral can be extracted, where practicable, prior to the development taking place, or
• the incompatible development is of a temporary nature and can be completed with the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed, or
• the development is of a minor nature which would not inhibit extraction of the mineral resource, or
• there is an overriding need for the development.