

Great Addington Neighbourhood Development Plan

2021-2041

**A report to North Northamptonshire Council on the
Great Addington Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by North Northamptonshire Council in March 2025 to carry out the independent examination of the Great Addington Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 March 2025.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It proposes the designation of a local green space and the allocation of site for residential development.
- 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 the 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
11 August 2025**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Great Addington Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021-2041 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) by Great Addington Parish Council (GAPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises because of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It has a focus on safeguarding the natural and historic features in the parish, designating a local green space, and allocating a site for residential use.
- 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 NNC, with the consent of GACP, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both NNC and GACP. 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 42 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level and more recently as an independent examiner. I have significant experience of undertaking neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:

- (a) that the Plan as submitted should proceed to a referendum; or
- (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
- (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

Other examination matters

2.6 In examining the Plan, I am required to check whether:

- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
- the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
- the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.

2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met.

3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan.
- the appendices of the Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Environmental Report.
- the Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- the Design Guide
- the Housing Site selection
- the Site Assessment Framework and Matrix
- the representations made to the Plan.
- GACP's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031.
- the adopted East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part Two (adopted in December 2023).
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 March 2025. The visit is summarised in Section 5 of this report. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

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

The December 2024 update of the NPPF

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

3.5 On this basis, the examination of the Plan against the basic condition that it should have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued

by the Secretary of State is based on the 2023 version of the NPPF. Plainly the Plan was submitted earlier in the year in that context. Where NPPF paragraph numbers are used in this report, they refer to those in the December 2023 version.

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

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such, the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.

4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), GACP has prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies.

4.3 The Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. It also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (June-July 2024). The Statement helpfully highlights the following key elements of engagement as follows:

- the Introductory Event (Section 3);
- the parish-wide questionnaire (Section 4);
- the housing site consultation (Section 5); and
- the consultation processes on the pre-submission Plan (Section 6).

4.4 The Statement sets out details of the way in which GACP engaged with specific organisations. The range of organisations involved was both comprehensive and diverse.

4.5 Appendix 3 sets out the comments on the pre-submission Plan and how GACP responded to those comments. This helps to describe the evolution of the Plan.

4.6 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. NNC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

4.7 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by NNC. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:

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- Cranford Parish Council
- Davies and Co
- Historic England
- National Highways
- Headland Developments Limited
- North Northamptonshire Council
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Anglian Water
- Northamptonshire Police

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

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Great Addington. It lies to the southeast of Kettering, and to the south of the A14. The eastern boundary of the neighbourhood area is formed by the River Nene, while the A510 passes to the west. To the north is the village of Woodford and to the south is Little Addington. Great Addington village lies just above the floodplain of the River Nene. Its population in 2021 was 299 persons living in 125 households. It was designated as a neighbourhood area by the former East Northamptonshire District Council on 8 April 2020.

5.2 The historic core of Great Addington is based around All Saints' Church, The Manor House and along Main Street and Lower Street. Coursed limestone is a particularly important feature of the village. The village has been developed outwards from this core through post-war and twentieth century housing which now define the main southern, eastern, and western entrances into the village. The north-south spine of the village is formed by Woodford Road, Main Street and Lower Street. Great Addington Memorial Hall, All Saints Church, and The Manor House lie at the junction of Main Street/Woodford Road/Cranford Road. The village pub, the Hare and Hounds, lies at the junction of Main Street/Lower Street/Ringstead Road. Great Addington primary school lies on the northern edge of the village. The Addington's Playing Field is to the south of Great Addington on Lower Street and is shared with Little Addington.

5.3 The remainder of the neighbourhood area is attractive countryside.

Development Plan Context

5.4 The development plan for the neighbourhood area is the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 and the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2.

5.5 The submitted Plan has sought to provide local value to several of the strategic policies in the Core Strategy. In general terms Policy 11 (Network of Urban and Rural Areas) identifies the type of development which will be appropriate in villages and in the countryside. In addition, the following policies have influenced the preparation of the submitted Plan:

- Policy 2 Historic Environment
- Policy 5 Water and Flood Risk Management
- Policy 7 Community Services and Facilities
- Policy 10 Provision of Infrastructure
- Policy 22 Delivering Economic Prosperity

- Policy 25 Rural Economic Development and Diversification

5.6 The East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 was adopted in December 2023. It covers the whole of the former district of East Northamptonshire. It provides additional district/sub-district level policy detail to support the overarching spatial strategy for North Northamptonshire set out in the Joint Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1). Great Addington is identified as small freestanding (other) villages. Amongst other things, Policy EN1 of the Local Plan comments that '(to) help maintain and strengthen local services, infill development opportunities within the existing built-up areas as defined through Policy EN2 and the supporting text, or a made Neighbourhood Plan, will be supported. 'Rural exceptions' affordable housing schemes (Policy EN3) or other small-scale employment and community-based proposals will also be supported. Further development beyond the extent of the built-up area will be resisted, unless allocated through a Neighbourhood Plan.' Other relevant policies in the Plan include:

- Policy EN2 Development Principles
- Policy EN12 Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy EN13 Non-Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy EN14 Tourism, cultural developments, and tourist accommodation

5.7 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. 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

5.8 NNC is currently preparing a Strategic Plan for the period up to 2045. Once adopted, it will replace the existing development plan. It is at its early stages of preparation and as such has not directly affected either the submitted Plan or this examination.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 March 2025. I approached from the A510 and Cranford Road to the north. This helped me to understand the village's position in the wider landscape and its accessibility to the strategic road network (A14).

5.10 I looked initially at the proposed housing allocation to the north and east Cranford Road. I saw its relationship with the built elements of the village.

- 5.11 I then looked at the village centre. I saw the significance of All Saints Church, the Village Hall and the Hare and Hounds PH.
- 5.12 I walked along Lower Street to the Addingtons Playing Field. I saw that it was both well-equipped and well-maintained.
- 5.13 I then looked at the range of proposed Locally Valued Heritage Assets.
- 5.14 I left the neighbourhood area and drove to Ringstead. This helped me to understand the role of the River Nene and its tributaries in the wider landscape.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.

6.2 As part of this process, I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
- 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 2023 (NPPF).

6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are of specific relevance to the Great Addington Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 and the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2;
- 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 ministerial statements.

6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies that address a range of development and environmental matters. It has a focus on safeguarding its natural and historic features, allocating a site for residential use, and designating a local green space.

6.8 At a more practical level, the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph ID:41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.

6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. Most of 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 comments about the delivery of housing in the parish (Policy GA15), infill development (Policy GA16), and proposes a housing allocation (Policy GA17). It also includes a policy the conversion of rural buildings for business use (Policy GA21). In the social role, it includes policies on local green spaces (Policy GA11), on community facilities (Policy GA13), and on housing mix (Policy GA18). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It includes policies on the countryside (Policy GA2), locally important views (Policy GA3), ecology (Policy GA6) and design (Policy GA10). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the local development plan context in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan for the former East Northamptonshire part of North Northamptonshire. Subject to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, GACP commissioned the preparation of an Environmental Report. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It makes the following conclusions:

'Overall, no potential significant negative effects have been identified through the policy appraisal of the Great Addington Neighbourhood Plan. Significant positive effects are considered likely in relation to community wellbeing. This reflects the plan seeking to deliver small-scale housing that will meet the identified local need, as well as the focus on designating green spaces, safeguarding infrastructure, and promoting active lifestyles. These contribute to enhancing physical and mental health and wellbeing within the community.'

Minor positive effects are considered likely for the historic environment, landscape, and biodiversity. This is due to the focus of the Great Addington Neighbourhood Plan maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure – which will contribute to the setting of heritage features, the historic character of the neighbourhood area, and biodiversity connectivity. Additionally, there are policies linked to protecting named specific heritage features and the countryside environment, and policies focused on bringing forward ecological improvements. Minor positive effects also reflect the incorporation of the HRA findings to mitigate effects to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits site. These all contribute to the minor positive effects that are anticipated for these themes. Minor positive effects are also concluded likely for transportation and movement, given the focus of the plan policies on parking provision, safeguarding and extending the existing public rights of way, and providing safe access to and from the site allocation for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

Broadly neutral effects are considered likely for climate change and flood risk, and land, soil, and water resources. This reflects the unlikely deviation from baseline conditions, linked to the site allocation of approximately 16 new homes, and the policy provisions: for example, focusing development within and adjacent to the settlement boundary. Broadly neutral effects are also considered likely for landscape. This reflects the location of the site adjacent to the settlement boundary, and the mitigation measures included in the site allocation policy to reduce landscape impacts. It also considers the wider policy provision.

Two recommendations are made – relating to biodiversity and geodiversity, and the historic environment. These recommendations will help to protect the integrity of a key habitat area and the special qualities of a designated building through the development of the site. However, uptake of these recommendations will not lead to changes to the likely overall effects.'

6.15 The Report considered two alternative options. The first was Option 1 (Site B – southeast of Rushglen Farm for 16-41 dwellings), and the second was Option 2 (Site C – south of Cranford Road for 20-27 dwellings). The summary findings show that Option 2 performs slightly better than Option 1. Nevertheless, Section 7 of the report concludes that Option 1 is preferred location for new housing as it will deliver a scale of development deemed acceptable by the local community; the site has good potential to deliver a layout that protects the character of the village, reduces countryside encroachment, and delivers community benefits including a community recreation area.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

6.16 GACP also commissioned the preparation of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) at the same time. The report advises that of the various policies in the Plan, two had the potential to cause a likely significant effect and were discussed with regards to their impacts on Habitats Sites within an Appropriate Assessment. The policies were GA15 (Housing requirement) and GA17 (Land North of Cranford Road, Great Addington).

6.17 These policies were discussed relating to Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar sites and the Plan's impact to those sites regarding the following impact pathways:

- recreational pressure;
- loss of functionally linked land;
- water quality (surface water runoff);
- water quality (treatment of sewage effluent); and,
- water quantity, volume, and flow.

6.18 The HRA/Appropriate Assessment concludes that the policy wording provided by the GANP (and overarching development plan documents) will provide sufficient policy framework to ensure that no adverse effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar will arise in isolation or in combination for:

- recreational pressure,
- loss of functionally linked land (alone),
- later quality (surface water runoff), and
- water quality (treatment of sewage effluent).

6.19 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns about either neighbourhood plan or nature conservation regulations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of the basic conditions.

Human Rights

6.20 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

6.21 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 Plan area. The wider community and GACP 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 policies.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

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

- 7.8 The Plan is very well-organised and presented. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and the supporting text. It includes a series of high-quality photographs and maps. In the round it is an excellent example of a neighbourhood plan.
- 7.9 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies. The Introduction comments about the way in which the Plan was prepared and when the neighbourhood area was designated. It properly identifies the neighbourhood area and the Plan period. It also comments about the planning policy context within which the Plan has been prepared.
- 7.10 Section 2 comments about the local context and the history of the parish.
- 7.11 Section 3 comments about the consultation processes which have underpinned the production of the Plan. It overlaps with the Consultation Statement.

- 7.12 Section 4 sets out the vision for the Plan and how it will be achieved. It makes a strong functional relationship between the various issues.
- 7.13 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

GA1: Parking Standards

- 7.14 The supporting text highlights a series of parking issues in the parish. The policy comments that new development shall provide for parking in accordance with the Northamptonshire Parking Standards. I looked at these issues during the visit.
- 7.15 On the one hand, the policy reinforces existing parking standards in the County. However, on the other hand, it relates those standards to a package of parking related issues. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA2: Countryside

- 7.16 The context for the policy is that Great Addington is a rural area lying in the Nene Valley. The supporting text advises that the rural setting to Great Addington village is highly valued by local people with 91% of respondents to the 2023 Questionnaire Survey identifying the country setting as the most important feature of the Parish. In addition, 96% agreed that the countryside around Great Addington should be protected for the sake of its intrinsic character, beauty, heritage, and wildlife.
- 7.17 The policy comments that the countryside (land outside the Settlement Boundary as defined on Map 2) will be protected for the sake of its intrinsic character, beauty, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and to ensure it may be enjoyed by all. It also advises that in countryside locations only development that is in accordance with national planning policies, strategic planning policies or allocations; or with the other policies of this Neighbourhood Plan will be supported.
- 7.18 The policy has been carefully designed so that it marries local circumstances (the settlement boundary) with national and local planning policies. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA3: Locally Important Views

- 7.19 The Plan advises that the context to the policy is that there are many scenic views of the village from the surrounding countryside that local people value, and the most important are detailed in Appendix 1.

7.20 The policy comments that development should be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to the local landscape and that the potential to enhance the landscape should be considered wherever possible. The policy also advises that particular sensitivity should be shown for the views that are regarded as highly characteristic (as shown on Map 3).

7.21 I looked at a selection of the views during the visit and readily understood the reasoning for their incorporation in the policy. Furthermore, the policy is presented in a non-prescriptive way. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA4: Public Rights of Way

7.22 The supporting text advises that Great Addington has an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways both within the village and outside it, into the surrounding countryside. It goes on to comment that these rights of way are an appreciated and well-used community asset that contributes to health and wellbeing. The 2023 Questionnaire Survey showed that 57% of respondents used the Rights of Way network daily, and as such the community is keen see the existing footpath, cycle and bridleway network extended and enhanced.

7.23 The policy comments that development should protect public rights of way and wherever possible create new links to the network including footpaths and cycle ways. It also advises that the creation of an off-road cycle/footpath link between Great Addington and Raunds is supported as part of a new high-level route crossing between Burton Latimer and Raunds.

7.24 I saw the importance of the various rights of way during the visit and readily understood the reasoning for the preparation of policy of this nature. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA5: Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Mitigation Strategy

7.25 The supporting text advises that the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits is a Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site. It covers 1,358 hectares in North and West Northamptonshire. It is a composite site comprising 20 separate blocks of land and water fragmented by roads and other features.

7.26 The policy comments that for all residential development within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar site 3km buffer zone, as shown in the Local Plan, financial contributions to mitigate the adverse impacts of development upon the SPA/Ramsar site will be sought in accordance with the

Addendum to the SPA Supplementary Planning Document: Mitigation Strategy or a later update of the Document.

7.27 The policy reinforces the strategic importance of the Gravel Pits. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA6: Ecology and Biodiversity

7.28 The supporting text comments that biodiversity net gain is an approach which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is proposed in the 25 Year Environment Plan and mandated as a condition of planning permission in the Environment Act 2021. It requires a 10% increase in biodiversity after development, compared to the level of biodiversity prior to the development taking place.

7.29 The policy has four related elements as follows:

- development should not harm the network of local ecological features and habitats (Map 5);
- new development will be expected to maintain and enhance these and other ecological corridors and landscape features (such as watercourses, hedgerows, and tree-lines);
- new development will be expected to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity; and
- the priority for biodiversity enhancement is to link the wetland habitat reservoirs through the River Nene corridor.

7.30 The policy reinforces the national importance of BNG. It also identifies a network of local ecological features and habitats. Within this broader context I recommend that the wording used in the first and second sentences of the policy is modified to bring the clarity of the NPPF and to allow NNC to be able to implement the policy through the development management process.

7.31 Otherwise, I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first and second sentences replace ‘will be expected to’ with ‘should’

GA7: Trees and Hedges

7.32 The supporting text advises that there are many significant mature trees within Great Addington village that play a role in framing key buildings, softening the built fabric and enhancing the special character of the village. There are many trees that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

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which protects and preserve trees for public enjoyment, environmental and aesthetic purposes. Many of the trees to the rear of the church and in the grounds of The Manor House are the subject of TPOs along with trees on Ringstead Road, Woodford Road and Lower Street. 95% of respondents to the 2023 Questionnaire Survey thought that the Neighbourhood Plan should try to retain existing trees and hedgerows of arboricultural or amenity value.

7.33 The policy has four elated parts as follows:

- existing trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible and integrated into new developments;
- development that damages or results in the loss or deterioration of ancient trees, hedgerows or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value will not be supported;
- proposals should be designed to retain ancient trees, hedgerows, or trees of arboricultural and amenity value; and
- proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees and hedgerows, indicating replanting where appropriate.

7.34 The policy takes a positive approach to these issues and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. It balances the need to safeguard ancient trees, hedgerows, or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value with an acknowledgement that the retention of other trees may not always be practicable and provides opportunities for replanting. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA8: Water Management

7.35 The supporting text advises that flood risk is an important consideration in guiding the location of new development and that most of the neighbourhood area is in Flood Risk Zone 1 with less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of suffering from fluvial flooding. Map 7 shows the most recent flood risk map for the area. The River Nene and its tributaries provide the main source of fluvial flood risk in the Neighbourhood Area with just a few properties alongside the brook in Great Addington village being in Flood Risk Zones 3 (high risk) and 2 (medium risk).

7.36 The policy advises that development sites should be built to manage surface water sustainably and utilise resources sustainably during use. It also comments that major developments should incorporate a series of principles.

7.37 The policy takes a positive approach to these matters and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF. I am satisfied that the principles are appropriate to the parish and are locally-distinctive. I am satisfied that it meets the basic

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

GA9: Locally Valued Heritage Assets

- 7.38 The supporting text comments that a list of features of Local Heritage Interest (Map 9 and Appendix 2) has been compiled to identify those heritage assets which are of local architectural or historic value. The list has been compiled from a range of local sources.
- 7.39 The policy comments that development proposals that will affect the identified locally valued heritage assets or their setting will be assessed having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.40 I looked at the proposed locally valued heritage assets during the visit. The reasoning for their selection was self-evident. In addition, the policy element is a local iteration of paragraph 209 of the NPPF. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA10: Design

- 7.41 The supporting text comments that through good design the Plan wants to maintain and enhance the individual character of the parish and create places that work well for both occupants and users and are built to last. 93% of those responding to the 2023 Questionnaire Survey thought that the Plan should include guidance on the design of new buildings. The policy is underpinned by the Great Addington Design Guide. Its main objective is to develop design guidelines that any potential development should follow to retain and protect the rural, tranquil character and historic beauty of the area.
- 7.42 The policy comments that to support the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, development should reflect the Great Addington Design Guide. It goes on to advise that development that is not well designed will not be supported, especially where it fails to reflect the Great Addington Design Guide and government and local guidance on design.
- 7.43 The policy is carefully underpinned by the excellent Design Guide. In the round, the policy and the Design Guide represent an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA11: Local Green Space

7.44 The supporting text advises that in the 2023 Questionnaire Survey local people were invited to identify Local Green Spaces (LGS) for protection. In this context, the Addingtons Playing Field has been designated principally for its recreational value.

7.45 The policy advises that the Addingtons Playing Field (as shown on Map 10), is designated as LGS. It also comments that development proposals within the LGS will only be supported in very special circumstances.

7.46 I looked at the Playing Field during the village. I am satisfied that it meets the designation criteria for LGSs in the NPPF. Whilst it is to the south of Great Addington it is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. In addition, the policy takes the matter-of-fact approach in paragraph 107 of the NPPF. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA12: Ultrafast Connectivity

7.47 The supporting text advises that internet connectivity is an essential requirement. The policy comments that new dwelling and business development should incorporate open access ducting to industry standards, to enable all new premises and homes to be directly served by fibre optic broadband technology (Fibre to the Premise).

7.48 GACP's comments about the importance of digital connectivity are well-founded. Nevertheless, the updates to the Building Regulations in 2022 introduced gigabit broadband infrastructure and connectivity requirements for the construction of new homes in England. In these circumstances I recommend the deletion of the policy as the matter is addressed nationally. GACP supported the deletion of the policy in its response to the clarification note.

7.49 In these circumstances I recommend that a modified version of the supporting text remains in the Plan to remind the development industry of its obligations.

Delete the policy

At the end of paragraph 8.19 add: 'The Building Regulations introduced national gigabit broadband infrastructure and connectivity requirements for certain types of development in 2022.'

GA13: Retention of Community Services and Facilities

7.50 The supporting text advises that the loss of any of the limited services and facilities that residents currently enjoy can have a significant impact on

people's quality of life and the overall viability of the community. With an increasing proportion of older people in the population, especially those who have been resident in Great Addington for many years, access to locally based services will become increasingly important due to lower mobility levels and lack of public transport.

7.51 The policy advises that a series of facilities will be protected and development which assists their diversification and improvement will be supported in accordance with North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 Policy 7.

7.52 I noted the importance of the identified community facilities during the visit. In addition, the policy carefully applies a Local Plan policy to the protection of the identified local facilities. In the round the policy has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF. In this context I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA14: Infrastructure

7.53 The supporting text advises that new development can have an impact on existing, and the need for new, infrastructure, services, and amenities. It also comments that to enable new housing development to take place, there will need to be improvements to local services and facilities. However, at the same time it acknowledges that the Plan must be deliverable.

7.54 The policy comments that new development will be supported by the provision of new or improved infrastructure, together with financial contributions for the following off-site infrastructure requirements where appropriate:

- the improvement, remodelling or enhancement of Great Addington Memorial Hall;
- countryside access improvements in accordance with Policy GA4; and
- community infrastructure improvements including the provision of traffic speed reduction measures, parish notice boards, seats, children's play area equipment, litter bins.

7.55 The policy takes a positive approach to infrastructure and has regard to Sections 8, 11 and 12 of the NPPF. The three identified areas of infrastructure for potential off-site contributions are locally-distinctive. Furthermore, the approach taken in the policy has regard to national policy on developer contributions, and has been designed to avoid threatening the commercial viability of development proposals. In this context I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA15: Housing Requirement

7.56 The supporting text advises that Table 16 of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan sets out a rural housing need for parishes of a particular scale in terms of population. The figures are intended as indicative guidance for potential/emerging neighbourhood plans in terms of helping meet future housing need, as opposed to a policy requirement. The indicative housing requirement for Great Addington is 11-20 dwellings.

7.57 The Plan advises that whilst it does not need to plan for 11-20 dwellings, it is mindful that it wants to plan beyond 2031 and the opportunities for young people to live in the village are limited and unaffordable. It also comments that some more homes are needed to improve the viability of the village especially as Census data show that the resident population of Great Addington parish has declined from 327 in 2011 to 299 in 2021. The 2023 Questionnaire Survey showed that most residents felt that the Plan should make some provision for more housing.

7.58 The policy comments that housing requirement for Great Addington Neighbourhood Area for the period 2021 to 2040 is for approximately 11 to 20 dwellings. It advises that this will be met by existing committed developments; the allocation of land North of Cranford Road for the development of approximately 16 dwellings (in accordance with Policy GA17); and windfall development (in accordance with Policy GA16).

7.59 The policy takes a very positive approach to new housing development. It has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF, and delivers an important local element of the adopted Local Plan. The policy acts as a context for the other related housing policies. In this context I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA16: Infill

7.60 The supporting text advises that the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan defined a Settlement Boundary for Great Addington, but this was replaced by the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 which does not define settlement boundaries but allows neighbourhood plans to decide their own. The 2023 Questionnaire Survey shows that 76% of respondents think that a Settlement Boundary is a good way of managing housing development. As such the Plan defines a new Great Addington Settlement Boundary to help identify opportunities for infill development. The new Settlement Boundary is based on the one included in the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan which has given rise to very little infill development in the past. As such with

no infill sites coming forward through a local call for sites, the opportunities for future infill development are likely to remain very limited.

- 7.61 The policy advises that housing development proposals will be supported within the Settlement Boundary identified on Map 11.
- 7.62 I am satisfied that the proposed Settlement Boundary has been appropriately defined. I am also satisfied that the policy wording is appropriate. In combination these two issues will ensure that new development in the parish is focused in Great Addington which will provide ready access to its commercial and community facilities. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA17: Land North of Cranford Road, Great Addington

- 7.63 The supporting text comments that a local 'call for sites' was also undertaken in August and September 2023. A total of three sites were put forward by landowners and developers. Basic information was gathered for each site and each option was appraised for its suitability, availability and achievability using clearly defined sustainability criteria. The preferred housing site is to the north of Cranford Road, opposite Rushwell Close. The site will provide around sixteen dwellings together with a community recreation area.
- 7.64 The policy comments that approximately 1.4 hectares of land north of Cranford Road (opposite Rushwell Close) is allocated of which approximately 0.61 hectares is for housing development and the remainder for green space. The policy includes a series of criteria.
- 7.65 I looked carefully at the proposed housing allocation during the visit. I noted its relationship with the built elements of the village, and that it is well-located and is largely a self-contained site. I note the representation from Headland Developments Limited advising that the site is available and deliverable. In addition, I am satisfied that the site has been properly selected.
- 7.66 I have noted the comments from Historic England. I am satisfied that the development of the site can be satisfactorily accommodated within the overall historic fabric of the village, and that criterion F will ensure that the proposed development will properly address likely impact of the design, materials, layout, scale, height, and mass of the development on the setting of All Saints' Church.
- 7.67 In addition, I am satisfied that criteria A-C, E and G of the policy are both appropriate and locally distinctive.
- 7.68 Criterion C comments about the need for the development of the site to take account of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA to the satisfaction of

Natural England. I sought GAPC's view on the extent to which it is necessary to mention the role of Natural England given that NNC will liaise with Natural England and other organisations as part of the determination of planning applications on the site. In its response to the clarification note GAPC drew my attention to the origin of this issue in the HRA. On this basis I am satisfied that this criterion should remain. However, I recommend that the full text from the HRA is included and that the unnecessary reference to Natural England is removed.

7.69 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace criterion D with: 'The proposal must demonstrate that there is an adequate solution to mitigate the effects of development on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the Habitats Site result prior to any grant of planning permission.'

GA18: Housing Mix

7.70 The supporting text provides a range of information on housing need, the existing mix of housing and the ageing of the local population to underpin the policy.

7.71 The policy comments that unless informed by more up to date evidence of housing need, on developments of five or more dwellings, the proportion of market housing that is four or more bedrooms should be at the lower end of the 15-20% range. It also comments that applicants should demonstrate how their development will contribute to meeting the housing needs of older people.

7.72 I note that the policy is underpinned by the North Northamptonshire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (July 2023). It provides an evidence base on housing need and mix to inform local planning policy in North Northamptonshire. The analysis identifies an appropriate mix of affordable and market homes in North Northamptonshire. In this context I am satisfied that the policy has regard to Sections 5 and 8 of the NPPF.

7.73 The policy refers both to housing sizes and meeting the needs of older people. In its response to the clarification note GAPC advised that its expectation is that proposals for five or more homes should address both housing size requirements and the needs of older people. In this context I recommend that the second sentence of the policy is modified to reinforce this point, and that this aspect of the policy should be applied where it is practicable to do so.

7.74 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 second sentence of the policy with: ‘Wherever practicable, development proposals should also demonstrate how they will contribute to meeting the housing needs of older people.’

GA19: Affordable Housing

7.75 The supporting text sets out the national approach towards affordable housing. The policy advises that the priority for the provision of affordable housing in Great Addington is First Homes. It also comments that all affordable housing will be subject to conditions, or a planning obligation will be sought, to ensure that when homes are allocated, priority is given to people with a local connection to neighbourhood area (i.e. including living, working or with close family ties in the area).

7.76 I am satisfied that the policy has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF and meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

GA20: Residential Conversion of Rural Buildings

7.77 The supporting text advises that in 2014, new permitted development rights (Class Q) were introduced which allow for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings without the need for planning permission. Several conversion schemes have taken place in Great Addington under these rights. However, various conditions and restrictions apply and before starting development, there is a requirement to apply to the local planning authority for prior approval.

7.78 The supporting text also comments about the following matters:

- many rural buildings are attractive, frequently constructed from local materials and often reflect the local vernacular, which in turn contribute significantly towards the character and diversity of the Parish. The conversion of these rural buildings to provide new homes can make the best possible use of existing buildings and reduce the demand for new buildings in the countryside;
- not all buildings are suitable for conversion or adaptation to housing as they may be of modern materials, poorly designed or constructed. Redundant buildings proposed for re-use should be structurally sound to ensure they are able and appropriate for conversion; and
- any extensions or alterations should respect the form and character of the existing building and not extend beyond the existing curtilage.

7.79 The policy advises that the re-use and adaptation of redundant or disused buildings for residential use will be supported where various design criteria are met.

7.80 I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to the future of rural buildings. The supporting text for Policy GA20 helpfully identifies the flexibilities provided by Class Q of the Use Classes Order. The policy has regard to Sections 5, 8 and 16 of the NPPF, I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA21: Business Conversion of Rural Buildings

7.81 The supporting text comments that some of Great Addington's businesses are already located on the area's farms, and that there is community support for small business units and farm diversification enterprises in redundant farm buildings. 46% of respondents to the 2021 Questionnaire Survey supported farm diversification and 59% supported the re-use of rural buildings for business use.

7.82 The policy advises that there-use, adaptation, or extension of rural buildings for business use will be supported where various criteria are met,

7.83 The policy takes a positive approach to the future of rural buildings. The supporting text for Policy GA20 helpfully identifies the flexibilities provided by Class Q of the Use Classes Order. The policy has regard to Sections 6, 8 and 16 of the NPPF, I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

GA22: Working from Home

7.84 The supporting text comments that many of the area's businesses are home-based and that the pandemic is likely to have caused a permanent shift to homeworking. The 2021 Census shows that 38.7% of Great Addington's residents that were in employment worked mainly at or from home compared with 31.5% nationally. The policy comments that development that enables home working will be supported if the development meets a series of criteria.

7.85 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter. Given that paragraph 10.7 comments about the flexibility for people to work from home, I recommend that it is expanded to advise that the policy only applies to such proposals which would represent a material change of use of the premises concerned. GAPC agreed with this approach in its response to the clarification note.

7.86 Otherwise I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of the policy with: 'Insofar as planning permission is required, development that enables home working will be supported if the development:'

Other Matters - General

7.87 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly 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 NNC and GACP to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

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

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2041. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area, to maintain its environmental and heritage assets and to bring land forward for residential development.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Great Addington 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 North Northamptonshire Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Great Addington Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by the former East Northamptonshire District Council on 8 April 2020.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner.

**Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
11 August 2025**