

Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2018-2033

**A report to South Oxfordshire District Council
on the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development
Plan Review**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by South Oxfordshire District Council in June 2025 to carry out the independent examination of the review of the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 July 2025.
- 3 The Plan is a good example of a neighbourhood plan review. It seeks to bring the Plan up-to-date and responds to the adoption of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. It includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets all the necessary legal requirements and should be made by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
16 October 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2018-2033 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) by Chalgrove Parish Council (CPC) 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 aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 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 (and a review of a plan) can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and setting in the wider landscape.
- 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.

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 SODC, with the consent of CPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SODC and CPC. 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 other neighbourhood plan examinations. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 The examination process for the review of a 'made' neighbourhood plan is set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

Other examination matters

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

3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the SODC SEA/HRA screening report.
- the CPC Modification Statement.
- the SODC Statement of Significance
- the Design Guidance and Codes.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- CPC's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011-2035).
- the submitted Joint Local Plan (South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse) (JLP).
- the Inspectors letter to SODC on the JLP (26 September 2025).
- the Homes England consultation website on Chalgrove Airfield.
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 July 2025. 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 made to the submitted plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations. I was assisted in this process by the comprehensive nature of many of the representations and the professional way in which the Plan has been developed.

The examination process for the review of a neighbourhood plan

3.4 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 identifies the circumstances that might arise as and when qualifying bodies seek to review 'made' neighbourhood plans and introduces a proportionate process to do so based on the changes proposed.

3.5 There are three types of modification which can be made to a neighbourhood plan or order. The process will depend on the degree of change which the modification involves and as follows:

- minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum; or

- material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order and which would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan; or
 - material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.
- 3.6 CPC has considered this issue. It takes the view that the proposed changes to the 'made' Plan fall into the second category.
- 3.7 SODC has also undertaken a separate assessment of the issue. It takes the same view as CPC on the scale and nature of the modifications to the policies in the 'made' Plan.
- 3.8 I have considered these assessments very carefully. I have concluded that the review of the Plan includes material modifications which do not change the nature of the Plan and which would require examination but not a referendum.
- 3.9 In these circumstances I will examine the Plan against Schedule A2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The regulations identify that this report must recommend one of three outcomes:
- that the local planning authority should make the draft plan; or
 - that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in the report; or
 - that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan.
- 3.10 Section 7 of this report assesses each policy in turn and identifies any modifications required to ensure that the policy meets the basic conditions. My recommendation is then set out in Section 8.

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), CPC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies. It is a good example of a statement of this type. It sets out key findings in a concise report which is underpinned with a more detailed table which advises about the comments received and how the Plan responded to those comments.
- 4.3 Section 2 records the various activities that were held to engage the local community. This process reflects the nature of the review of the 'made' Plan. The Statement also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (December 2023 to January 2024).
- 4.4 Section 3 provides details about the comments received and how the Plan was refined because of this process. This helps to explain the way in which the Plan was refined following that consultation exercise.
- 4.5 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. SODC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by SODC. It ended on 11 June 2025. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
- Thames Water
 - National Gas
 - Natural England
 - Nicholas King Homes
 - Catesby Estates
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - Homes England

- 4.7 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so, this report refers to 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 Chalgrove. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 21 December 2012.
- 5.2 Chalgrove is a rural village community situated approximately twelve miles to the south east of Oxford City. Its population is approximately 2,830 persons living in around 1,100 homes. The northern and eastern boundary of the village is defined by the B480 road which runs from Stadhampton (to the north and west) to Watlington (to the south and east). The strategic importance of this road results in light traffic within the village itself. Chalgrove Airfield, and the Business Park are located to the north of the B480.
- 5.3 The village has a post office, a church, several shops, community halls, three public houses, a primary school, a modern doctors' surgery, and other amenities.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan was adopted in December 2020. It sets out the basis for future development in the District up to 2035.
- 5.5 Chalgrove is identified as 'larger village' in the adopted Local Plan (Appendix 7). Policy H4 of the Plan addresses development in such villages. Paragraph 4.17 comments that the Local Plan proposes the provision of 15% growth in the Larger Villages. This level of growth has been calculated using the existing housing stock as it was at 2011 (the base date of the Local Plan) and is on top of Core Strategy allocations where these exist. The Larger Villages have already collectively delivered 14% growth in housing based on completed dwellings between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2020. The Plan is comments that it is planning positively for further growth over the remainder of the Plan period. Paragraph 4.18 advises that development in the Larger Villages should be proportional, appropriate, and dependent on existing infrastructure. It is considered that the most appropriate mechanism for delivering housing in larger villages is by preparing a neighbourhood plan and allocating development sites.
- 5.6 Policy STRAT7 comments about the strategic allocation at Chalgrove Airfield which is identified in the Plan to deliver approximately 3,000 new homes with at least 2,105 to be delivered within the Plan period, 5 hectares of employment land, 3 pitches for gypsies and travellers, education facilities, public open spaces, retail and supporting services and other community facilities.
- 5.7 The following other policies are particularly relevant to the submitted Plan:

Policy STRAT 1	The Overall Strategy
Policy EMP10	Development in Rural Areas
Policy ENV1	Landscape and Countryside
Policy ENV3	Biodiversity
Policy ENV4	Watercourses
Policy ENV6	Historic Environment

Policy ENV7	Listed Buildings
Policy DES1	Delivering High Quality Development

- 5.8 SODC and the Vale of White Horse District Council submitted their Joint Local Plan 2041 to the Secretary of State in December 2024 for independent examination. That Plan does not carry forward Policy STRAT7 (Chalgrove Airfield) from the adopted Local Plan). The submitted Plan has been prepared within its up-to-date development plan context. In doing so, it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter. In the round the submitted Plan seeks to add value to the different components of the development plan and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 July 2025. I approached it from Stadhampton to the west. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape in general and its accessibility to the strategic road network.
- 5.10 I looked initially at the recently-constructed residential development to the west of the village.
- 5.11 I then took the opportunity to look at the village centre. I saw the local significance of the pubs, the shops, the school, and the village hall. I also saw that there was a clearly defined Village centre.
- 5.12 I then walked to the Church. I saw its slightly remote location from the village.
- 5.13 I then looked at the various commercial uses to the immediate east of the Airfield off Warpsgrove Lane.
- 5.14 I left the neighbourhood area and drove to Clare and Tetsworth to the east. This emphasised its proximity to the A40 and the M40 strategic routes.

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 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 particularly relevant to the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan Review:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic

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

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies on a range of development and environmental matters. In addition, it seeks to update the 'made' Plan to take account of changes in national and local planning policies
- 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. The submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes policies for residential development (Policies C1 and H1). In the social role, it includes policies on housing mix (Policy H2), and on community facilities (Policies CF1-CF3). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has a specific policy on village character and design (Policy C2). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in South Oxfordshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. Subject

to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, SODC undertook a screening exercise in May 2024 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 The SEA included a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan. It assesses the potential impact of the Plan's policies on the following protected sites:
- Little Wittenham SAC;
 - Aston Rowant SAC;
 - Chiltern Beechwood SAC;
 - Cothill Fen SAC;
 - Hartslock Wood SAC; and
 - Oxford Meadow SAC
- 6.16 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on these protected sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns about neighbourhood plan obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of neighbourhood plan regulations.

Human Rights

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

Summary

- 6.19 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the neighbourhood area. The wider community and CPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in the review of the Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans should address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the policies in the Plan.
- 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 (Introduction and Sections 2 to 4)

- 7.8 The Plan is well-organised and presented. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text.
- 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.
- 7.10 Section 2 sets out information about the way in which the Plan has been developed. It also comments about the community's engagement in the development of the Plan and which overlaps with the details in the Consultation Statement. It properly identifies the neighbourhood area (on Map 1). Whilst the Plan period is shown on the front cover, I recommend that it is addressed in this part of the Plan so that the prescribed conditions (as set out in paragraph 2.5 of this report) are met.

At the end of the first paragraph of section 2.3 add: 'The Plan period is 2018-2033.'

- 7.11 Section 3 sets out information about the neighbourhood area. It provides interesting and comprehensive details which help to set the scene for the eventual policies. It also comments on sustainability issues and the Village Character Assessment.
- 7.12 Section 4 sets out the vision, aims and objectives for the Plan. The vision is as follows:

'To preserve and enhance the look and feel of a village, our community spirit and our countryside whilst accommodating our identified housing and community needs.'

- 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.

General comments on the Plan and the format of its policies

- 7.14 The Plan is a good example of a review of a neighbourhood plan. It helpfully consolidates the review of the Plan into the structure of the 'made' Plan.
- 7.15 For the purposes of this report, I do not comment in any detail on the retained policies other than where they may have been affected by the adoption of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan or by updates in national planning policy. In some cases, I have recommended modifications to the wording of policies in the made Plan to reflect the approach and language now taken in neighbourhood plans (and which has matured since the Plan was made).

Policy C1 – Development Within the Built-up Area

- 7.16 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan. It seeks to focus new development within the built-up area other than where it is related to policies in the Plan or in the Local Plan. In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to the location of new development. It will help to ensure that new development is located within the built-up area and have ready access to its commercial and community facilities.
- 7.17 Nicholas King Homes comments that:

'the existing adopted policy and proposed policy are overly restrictive in terms of defining the built-up area and believe this policy does not allow for sustainable developments to come forward within the Neighbourhood Area. The justification set out within the plan states that it is important to maintain and/or enhance the form of the village and ensure that new development does not compromise this. It states the aim is to encourage small scale development that does not extend development into the open countryside in a manner or form that will compromise the setting of the village.'

Chalgrove is identified as a larger village in the Settlement Hierarchy set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and therefore it is a sustainable location for proportionate growth. However, with the existing wording of Policy C1, there is very little scope for additional small-scale development to be delivered as it excludes almost all undeveloped land within or adjoining the village, and some developed land which could be redeveloped. We appreciate that there is a strategic allocation within the Local Plan at Chalgrove Airfield, however this should not restrict or place a cap on further sustainable development coming forward within the area, and as it stands, there is very little opportunity for this given the overly restrictive wording of this policy. There is currently no live planning application in respect of Chalgrove Airfield which even if granted will take a long time to deliver new housing (given the amount of infrastructure required). Developing small sites within Chalgrove would ensure a steady supply of much needed new housing is delivered as well as enhancing the vitality of existing services, etc.'

7.18 In its response to the clarification note, CPC advised that:

‘the position of (Nicholas King Homes), and their proposed ability to add “proportionate” growth to Chalgrove, is actually contrary to the SODC Local Plan 2035, which demonstrates that Chalgrove has already delivered more homes than required by the Local Plan, and also the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041, which confirms this situation.

Policy H1A was amended following consultation, specifically in regard to the maintenance agreement for the site and what was and was not possible. As indicated above, we believe that the policy does serve a practical purpose and should be retained. The site is reaching completion, however not yet complete; therefore it is not possible to rule out potential changes to the scheme. The policy would still be relevant in guiding any future planning decisions on the site. As identified above, the omission of the wording from Policy C1 was in error, and it should be reinstated. With reference to the conformity of the Policy with the Local Plan 2035, as has already been stated, Chalgrove has already delivered in excess of the required quantum of development for the village, as defined in the Local Plan 2035 Policy H3’

7.19 Elsewhere in its response, CPC commented that the omission of the wording from Policy C1 (as submitted) was in error, and it is suggested that I reinstate the wording as used in the made Plan.

7.20 I have carefully noted the representation from Nicholas King Homes. I have also noted that the company is promoting a parcel of land in and on the edge of the village for residential development. I also acknowledge that Chalgrove is a larger village in the District’s settlement hierarchy where it may be appropriate for a degree of new development to come forward. Nevertheless, the adopted Local Plan does not identify the need for additional housing development beyond that already allocated and/or developed. This situation is reaffirmed in the emerging Joint Local Plan. In these circumstances I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate approach which is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

7.21 I have also considered the wording and structure of the policy. As submitted, it includes a detailed element about a definition of land which is not included in the built-up area. Whilst this is important as an explanation for the policy and how the built-up area is defined for development management purposes, such information is now traditionally presented in the supporting text of a neighbourhood plan rather than in the policy wording, and I recommend a modification accordingly. I also recommend that the approach towards development outside the built-up area is simplified by its cross referencing with national and local planning policy on this matter. As submitted the policy attempts to define ‘appropriate’ development which will not be definitive. Finally, I recommend that the complicated approach taken in the policy towards the approach to allocated sites is simplified.

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

Replace the policy with:

‘Within the built-up area of Chalgrove and on sites allocated in a development plan document, proposals will be supported where they conform with other relevant development plan policies.

The built-area is defined by the boundaries of permanent, non-agricultural buildings located around the edge of the village, where such properties are directly connected to the village’s main, singular form.

Infill development on the edge of the built-up area and development proposals outside the built area will only be supported where they conform with national and local planning policies.’

Policy C2 - Design and Character

- 7.23 This policy has been updated to add a reference to the new Design Guidance and Codes document which forms part of the Plan. The specific update is the inclusion of an additional criterion advising that all planning proposals should adhere to the Chalgrove Design Guidance and Codes to ensure coherence with, and enhancement of, the character of the area.
- 7.24 In general terms the policy is a good local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. I recommend that the opening element of the policy is recast so that it reflects neighbourhood plan best practice on two related matters. The first is that policies should set out the expectations for new development rather than commenting that planning permission will be granted. This acknowledges that SODC will need to consider all relevant development plan policies when determining planning applications. The second is that the overall policy (which contains several criteria) should be applied in a proportionate way. This approach will acknowledge that domestic and minor projects would be unlikely to trigger several of the criteria.
- 7.25 I also recommend an update to the final sentence to reflect the national rebranding of AONB as National Landscapes.
- 7.26 The submitted Plan is largely silent on the strategic allocation at Chalgrove Airfield (Policy STRAT7 of the adopted Local Plan). I have commented in Section 5 of this report that the emerging Joint Local Plan does not carry forward Policy STRAT7 from the adopted Local Plan. The examination of the Joint Local Plan has overlapped with this examination. On 26 September 2025, the Planning Inspectors advised SODC about their conclusions about the way in which the local plan duty to co-operate had been satisfied. The Inspectors invited SODC (and the Vale of White Horse Council) to withdraw the Joint Local Plan.
- 7.27 SODC and the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) comment about the conflict between the approach taken in the submitted Plan, and the contents of the Design Guidance and Codes. SODC advises that the Codes conflict with elements of the strategic allocation at the Airfield and Policy STRAT7 of the adopted Local Plan. The HCA comments that the Codes do not proposes any positive guidance for the development of the strategic site. In this context I note that the Home England

continues to work on development proposals for the strategic site and had commented extensively on the submitted JLP. I also note that an exhibition is taking place on 22 October to showcase the final proposals for the delivery of a sustainable new, residential-led community, ahead of the submission of planning applications to SODC by the end of 2025.

- 7.28 I have considered these comments very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the Design Guidance and Codes include a note to advise that they do not apply to any development proposals which may come forward on the strategic site. This reflects the very comprehensive nature of Policy STRAT 7 and the approach taken elsewhere in the District where a neighbourhood area includes a strategic allocation in the adopted Local Plan. Whilst I note the comments from the HCA, there is no obligation for CPC to produce any guidance on the strategic site in its neighbourhood plan. This conclusion acknowledges that national legislation provides considerable flexibility for a qualifying body to determine the matters to be addressed (or not to be addressed) in its plan. Plainly any development proposals on the site will be determined by SODC through the traditional development management process based on the contents of the adopted Local Plan and any other material planning considerations.
- 7.29 Otherwise I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Replace the opening elements of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should reflect and enhance the character of Chalgrove, reinforce local distinctiveness, and create a sense of place

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should be designed to meet the following criteria:’

Replace criterion j with: ‘Development proposals should take account of the District Council’s Joint Design Guide and the Chalgrove Design Guidance and Codes to ensure coherence with, and enhancement of, the character of the area’

Delete the penultimate sentence.

In the final sentence replace ‘AONB’ with ‘Chilterns National Landscape’

At the end of paragraph 1.1 of the Design Guidance and Codes add: ‘This document does not relate to any development proposals which may come forward for the development of Chalgrove Airfield which is already addressed in detail in Policy STRAT7 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.’

Policy H1 - Housing Site Allocation

- 7.30 CPC’s Modification Statement advises that the policy remains unchanged from the made Plan. Nevertheless, this fails to acknowledge that a new criterion is added into the policy (on the size and scale of development) and others are revised (on the Scout Hut and the maintenance of open spaces).

- 7.31 SODC makes a series of technical comments on the policy.
- 7.32 The retention of the policy has attracted objections from Nicholas King Homes and Catesby Estates. Nicholas King Homes comments that:

'Policy H1A allocates Land West of Marley Road and sets out a number of site-specific requirements, some of which are new and have been added through this review process and differ from the made Neighbourhood Plan. Given the site is under construction and planning permission has been granted, we do not understand the reasoning behind these additional requirements. Furthermore, the status of this policy has not been updated and still refers to the site as an allocation. This is not the case. This site is no longer an allocation, but a commitment that has planning permission, has been implemented and is clearly going to be completed. This should therefore no longer form part of the development plan and should be removed as part of this review.'

Catesby Estates comment that:

'With regard to the insertions in to Policy H1A, the reasoning for this is unclear; it has not been set out anywhere as to the justification for this. This is particularly the case when the development itself has planning permission and is at the advanced stages of construction. As previously indicated, it is considered that this policy should be omitted on the basis that the development is under construction, but at the very least, it should not be seeking to add further requirements and obligations.'

- 7.33 I looked at the site carefully during the visit. I saw that it was substantially built out. In its response to the clarification note SODC advised that 170 homes had been completed at the end of March 2025 and that the site would be completed by the end of 2025/26. It also advised that there are no outstanding planning applications which relate to the development of the site, including alterations to house types or layouts. For completeness it advised that there is a non-material amendment (P25/S2629/NM) to vary the approved riverside meadow planting plans as required by condition 1.
- 7.34 It is not unusual for a review of a neighbourhood plan to continue to allocate a site from the made Plan where the development concerned is partially completed. This process provides assurance that any further planning applications which come forward in the Plan period (either new proposals or variations of layouts/conditions) will be determined against that policy and be consistent with earlier decisions.
- 7.35 However, based on the evidence in this case, I am not satisfied that the policy serves any continued purpose based on the information provided by SODC. Whilst CPC has retained the policy in good faith to achieve the general ambitions set out in the previous paragraph, that approach has been overtaken by the pace at which the site has been developed. Moreover, these circumstances do not support CPC's intentions to revise the criteria in the policy.
- 7.36 In all the circumstances I recommend that both the policy and the supporting text are deleted from the Plan. Such an approach would largely mirror the approach taken by CPC to remove Policy H1b (Land to East of Chalgrove for up to 120 dwellings) from the made Plan as part of the review process. It will also remove unnecessary detail about the way in which the adopted Local Plan was developing at the time when the

made Plan was examined. Whilst that relationship was important at that time it is no longer relevant now that the Local Plan has been adopted.

Delete the policy

In Section 5.3 (Objectives and Policy Box) delete Policy H1 in the Objective 3 and 4 rows

Replace the Introduction section (and Map 3) with:

'The initial version of the Plan included two housing allocations (Policies H1A and H1B). Site H1a is now substantively completed and Site H1b is completed. In these circumstances they have now been removed from the Plan. For strategic housing delivery purposes, they are now commitments and completions.'

Delete Map 4

Delete the Justification

Delete the Community endorsement section

Delete the Site-Specific Policies section (including Policy H1A)

Delete Map 4A

Policy H2 - Dwelling Mix

7.37 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan

7.38 I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development

Policy H3 – Home Working

7.39 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan.

7.40 The policy takes a positive approach and has regard to Sections 6 and 8 of the NPPF. In this context, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy H4 - Residential parking

7.41 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan.

7.42 I recommend a modification to the policy so that its full extent is in bold text. I also recommend a modification to the third bullet point in the policy so that its application to residential proposals is clear and the wording used throughout is consistent.

7.43 Otherwise I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Show the initial part of the policy in bold text

Replace the third bullet point with: ‘Proposals for residential extensions should maintain the amount of on-plot parking spaces and not seek to rely on on-street parking.’

Policy H5 –Walking and Cycling

- 7.44 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan.
- 7.45 I recommend that the use of ‘must’ is replaced by ‘should’. This reflects the industry standard for a neighbourhood plan policy which has evolved since the Plan was made. This will also ensure that the policy is not overly restrictive and can be applied with clarity and consistency.
- 7.46 Otherwise I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace ‘must’ with ‘should’

Policy CF1 - Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.47 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan.
- 7.48 I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy CF2 – Community Assets

- 7.49 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan.
- 7.50 I recommend that ‘will be resisted’ is replaced by ‘will not be supported’. This reflects the industry standard for a neighbourhood plan policy which has evolved since the Plan was made. This will also ensure that the policy can be applied with clarity and consistency. Otherwise, I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace ‘will be resisted’ with ‘will not be supported’

Policy CF3 – Improvements to Community Assets

- 7.51 This policy remains unchanged from the made Plan
- 7.52 I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Other Matters - General

- 7.53 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 SODC and CPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

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

Other Matters – Specific

- 7.54 SODC has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. I have included them in the recommended modifications on a policy-by-policy basis where they are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.55 I also recommend other modifications to the text of the Plan based on SODC's comments insofar as they are necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. In the main they will bring the Plan up-to-date. Other matters relate to the more general parts of the Plan. They have been agreed by CPC. It would be entirely appropriate for these corrections to be incorporated into the Plan. For convenience I list them using the relevant reference numbers in the SODC representation.
- 3 General Comment
 - 5 (Policy C2)
 - 11 General Comment
 - 12 Design Code (except the final paragraph)
 - 13 Design Code
 - 14 Design Code
- 7.56 Thames Water makes a series of technical points on the Plan. In its response to the clarification note CPC indicated that it would be happy to incorporate the various points. The representation raises a series of points which would consolidate the role and purpose of the Plan. Nevertheless, they are not necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. In addition, neighbourhood plan legislation provides considerable flexibility for a qualifying body to determine what it includes in its plan. In these circumstances I do not recommend that the Thames Water suggestions are incorporated into the Plan.

Implementation, Review and Monitoring

- 7.57 Section 6 of the Plan addresses the implementation, review, and monitoring in a very positive way. It comments about a five-year review and an End of Plan Period Review. This is best practice.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Review of the 'made' Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2033. It has been carefully prepared to refresh the Plan and to address changes in national and local planning policy which have arisen since the initial plan was 'made'

Conclusion

- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the Chalgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.
- 8.3 The recommended modifications refine the wording of certain policies and delete Policy H1 given that the former housing allocation is substantively completed. Nevertheless, the focus of the submitted review of the Plan remains fundamentally unchanged in its role and purpose.
- 8.4 I conclude that South Oxfordshire District Council should make the submitted Plan with the modifications specified in this report.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner. SODC managed the process in a very efficient way and CPC's responses to the clarification note were both thorough and timely.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
16 October 2025