

Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan: Responses to the Regulation 16 Publicity Period

Response number	Date	Name	Organisation	Link to response	Public hearing	Made plan notification
1	20 May 2026	[REDACTED]	Ardington House Ltd	<i>Full response available on page 3</i>	No, I do not request a public hearing	[REDACTED]
2	10 June 2026	[REDACTED]	Network Rail	<i>Full response available on page 5</i>	Don't know	[REDACTED]
3	24 June 2026	[REDACTED]	Thames Water	<i>Full response available on page 7</i>	Don't know	[REDACTED]
4	29 June 2026	[REDACTED]	National Highways	<i>Full response available on page 12</i>	Don't know	[REDACTED]

5	1 July 2026		Historic England	<i>Full response available on page 14</i>	Don't know	
6	2 July 2026		Natural England	<i>Full response available on page 20</i>	Don't know	
7	2 July 2026		Vale of White Horse District Council	<i>Full response available on page 24</i>	No, I do not request a public hearing	

Representations received after the publicity period

8	3 July 2026		Oxfordshire County Council	<i>Full response available on page 41</i>	Don't know	
---	-------------	--	----------------------------	---	------------	--

Response 1

Your comments:

Ardington House Limited fully supports the Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan and congratulates the Steering Group, the Parish Council and Bluestone Planning on the quality of the Submission Draft. The Plan reflects what residents and businesses across the parish value most, and it captures the distinctive character of Ardington in a way that gives clear guidance for the years ahead. As custodians of Ardington House and its parkland, we share the Plan's commitment to maintaining the historic landscape, the chalk streams, the woodland and the key views that define this place. Works at the property are ongoing throughout the year, including deadfall clearance, tree planting, fencing replacement and improvements to the Brook. These are routine for us and we are pleased that the Plan's policies on biodiversity, key habitats and the rural setting align so closely with how we already care for the estate. We would also note the wider contribution that Ardington House makes to the local economy. Our wedding and events business supports a network of village suppliers, including the Grocer Chef, the Boar's Head, Flowers by Kirsty, and many local people who work with us as waiting and bar staff at weddings. Our guests fill hotel rooms and B&Bs across the area throughout the season. We donate wedding flowers to Holy Trinity Church each week and we regularly offer the property as a venue for local charity events. We see this as part of what it means to be a working country house in the heart of the village, and we look forward to continuing that role under the framework the Plan sets out.

What changes do you consider necessary for the plan to meet the basic conditions?:

We have no proposed changes to the wording of the policies and consider the Plan ready to proceed. We would, however, like to take this opportunity to set out briefly how our own plans for the property sit alongside the Plan's aims, so that this is on record alongside the policies that will guide future decisions. Ardington House Limited is committed to the long-term maintenance and sensitive enhancement of the historic landscape at Ardington. Our forward thinking does not involve any new building or the loss of greenfield land. The focus is on the careful repurposing and renovation of existing building stock that has fallen into a dilapidated state. We are considering relocating our Events Office from the House into the stable block, which would allow that part of the property to be brought back into productive use without any extension or new footprint. The stables themselves would be retained. We also hope in time to reinstate the walled garden, again working with the existing fabric and historic layout, with associated glasshouses and a productive fruit and vegetable garden in the Victorian style that originally served the house. Further orchard planting and tree planting in and around the Brook is also planned to extend the woodland cover and enhance the riparian habitat. In each case our intention is to

bring proposals forward in a manner consistent with the Plan, the Ardington and Lockinge Design Code, and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan. The emphasis on reusing existing buildings, conserving heritage assets and their setting, protecting key views, respecting chalk stream setbacks, and enhancing biodiversity reflects how we already approach works at the property. The household and environment surveys conducted during the Plan's preparation provide a useful reference point and we have studied them carefully. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Parish Council and the community as any of these projects develop.

Response 2



Network Rail
1st Floor
Bristol Temple Point
Bristol
BS1 6NL

Date: 10 June 2026

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
PROPOSAL: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Development Plan

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for consulting us on the Ardington and Lockinge NDP. This email forms for the basis of our response.

Network Rail is a statutory undertaker responsible for maintaining and operating the country's railway infrastructure and associated estate. Network Rail owns, operates, maintains and develops the main rail network. This includes the railway tracks, stations, signalling systems, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts. The preparation of development plan policy is important in relation to the protection and enhancement of Network Rail's infrastructure.

The mainline from Paddington to North Road Junction runs through the Neighbourhood Plan area to the north. 1 level crossing is within the plan area (Butterfly Lane Public Level Crossing).

Level crossings can be impacted in a variety of ways by planning proposals:

- By a proposal being directly next to a level crossing
- By the cumulative effect of development added over time
- By the type of crossing involved
- By the construction of large developments (commercial and residential) where road access to and from site includes a level crossing
- By developments that might impede pedestrians ability to hear approaching trains
- By proposals that may interfere with pedestrian and vehicle users' ability to see level crossing warning signs

- By any developments for schools, colleges or nurseries where minors in numbers may be using a level crossing
- By any development or enhancement of the public rights of way

Butterly lane LC will be impacted by the Thames Reservoir SESRO proposals which sits just inside the NDP northern boundary. Network Rail are actively pursuing its closure through PROW diversion as part of this scheme.

It is Network Rail's and indeed the Office of Rail Regulation's (ORR) policy to reduce risk at level crossings not to increase risk as could be the case with an increase in usage at the level crossings in question. The Office of Rail Regulators, in their policy, hold Network Rail accountable under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and that risk control should, where practicable, be achieved through the elimination of level crossings in favour of bridges or diversions.

No policies within the plan look to impact on the operational railway however the Council have a statutory responsibility under planning legislation to consult the statutory rail undertaker where a proposal for development is likely to result in a material increase in the rail volume or a material change in the character of traffic using a level crossing over a railway:-

- (Schedule 4 (j) of the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order, 2015) requires that “...*development which is likely to result in a material increase in the volume or a material change in the character of traffic using a level crossing over a railway*” (public footpath, public or private road) the Planning Authority's Highway Engineer must submit details to both the Secretary of State for Transport and Network Rail for separate approval.

We trust these comments will be useful in the preparation of the forthcoming plan documents.

Yours Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Town Planner
Network Rail
Temple Point, Redcliffe Way, Bristol, BS1 6NL
www.networkrail.co.uk/property

The content of this email (and any attachment) is confidential. It may also be legally privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure.

This email should not be used by anyone who is not an original intended recipient, nor may it be copied or disclosed to anyone who is not an original intended recipient.

If you have received this email by mistake, please notify us by emailing the sender, and then delete the email and any copies from your system.

Liability cannot be accepted for statements made which are clearly the sender's own and not made on behalf of Network Rail.

Response 3



E: [REDACTED]@thamewater.co.uk
M: [REDACTED]

Vale of White Horse Council

Issued via email:
planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk

1st Floor West
Clearwater Court
Vastern Road
Reading
RG1 8DB

24 June 2026

Ardington & Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 Submission Draft, March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for allowing Thames Water to comment on the above.

As you may be aware, Thames Water are the water and sewerage undertaker for the District and hence are a “specific consultation body” in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. We have the following comments on the consultation document:

Water Supply and Wastewater/Sewerage Infrastructure

A key sustainability objective for the preparation of Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans should be for new development to be co-ordinated with the infrastructure it demands and to take into account the capacity of existing infrastructure. Paragraph 20 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2024, states: “Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for... infrastructure for waste management, water supply, wastewater...”

Paragraph 11 states: “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects”

Paragraph 28 relates to non-strategic policies and states: “Non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure...”

Paragraph 26 of the revised NPPF goes on to state: “Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production

of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary....”

The December 2025 draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation, published by the UK Government, proposes updates to national planning policy. The draft highlights the importance of resilient water infrastructure, with Policy W4: Water Infrastructure supporting the delivery and upgrade of water supply and treatment facilities. The policy recognises the benefits of improving capacity, reliability, and water quality, stating that proposals for such infrastructure should be given ‘substantial weight’.

The web based National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) includes a section on ‘water supply, wastewater and water quality’ and sets out that Local Plans should be the focus for ensuring that investment plans of water and sewerage/wastewater companies align with development needs. The introduction to this section also sets out that “Adequate water and wastewater infrastructure is needed to support sustainable development” (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 34-001-20140306).

It is important to consider the net increase in wastewater and water supply demand to serve the development and also any impact that developments may have off site, further down the network. The Neighbourhood Plan should therefore seek to ensure that there is adequate wastewater and water supply infrastructure to serve all new developments. Thames Water will work with developers and local authorities to ensure that any necessary infrastructure reinforcement is delivered ahead of the occupation of development. Where there are infrastructure constraints, it is important not to under estimate the time required to deliver necessary infrastructure. For example: local network upgrades take around 18 months and Sewage Treatment & Water Treatment Works upgrades can take 3-5 years.

The provision of water treatment (both wastewater treatment and water supply) is met by Thames Water’s asset plans and from the 1st April 2018 network improvements will be from infrastructure charges per new dwelling.

From 1st April 2018, the way Thames Water and all other water and wastewater companies charge for new connections has changed. The economic regulator Ofwat has published new rules, which set out that charges should reflect: fairness and affordability; environmental protection; stability and predictability; and transparency and customer-focused service.

The changes mean that more of Thames Water’s charges will be fixed and published, rather than provided on application, enabling you to estimate your costs without needing to contact us. The services affected include new water connections, lateral drain connections, water mains and sewers (requisitions), traffic management costs, income offsetting and infrastructure charges.

Thames Water therefore recommends that developers engage with them at the earliest opportunity (in line with paragraph 26 of the revised NPPF) to establish the following:

- The developments demand for water supply infrastructure;
- The developments demand for Sewage/Wastewater Treatment and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met; and
- The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the development both on and off site and can it be met.

Thames Water offer a Pre-Planning service which confirms if capacity exists to serve the development or if upgrades are required for potable water, waste water and surface water requirements:

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/larger-scale-developments/planning-your-development/water-and-wastewater-capacity>

In light of the above comments and Government guidance we consider that Neighbourhood Plan should include a specific reference to the key issue of the provision of wastewater/sewerage and water supply infrastructure to service development. This is necessary because it will not be possible to identify all of the water/sewerage infrastructure required over the plan period due to the way water companies are regulated and plan in 5 year periods (Asset Management Plans or AMPs). We recommend the Neighbourhood Plan include the following policy/supporting text:

PROPOSED NEW WATER/WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TEXT

“Where appropriate, planning permission for developments which result in the need for off-site upgrades, will be subject to conditions to ensure the occupation is aligned with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades.”

“The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that there is adequate water and wastewater infrastructure to serve all new developments. Developers are encouraged to contact the water/waste water company as early as possible to discuss their development proposals and intended delivery programme to assist with identifying any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement requirements. Where there is a capacity constraint the Local Planning Authority will, where appropriate, apply phasing conditions to any approval to ensure that any necessary infrastructure upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of development.”

Policy AL4 - Water Efficiency/Sustainable Design

We support the reference to sustainable use of water in Policy AL4, but this needs to be strengthened.

The Environment Agency has designated the Thames Water region to be “seriously water stressed” which reflects the extent to which available water resources are used. Future pressures on water resources will continue to increase and key factors are population growth and climate change.

Water conservation and climate change is a vitally important issue to the water industry. Not only is it expected to have an impact on the availability of raw water for treatment but also the demand from customers for potable (drinking) water. Therefore, Thames Water support the mains water consumption target of 110 litres per head per day (105 litres per head per day plus an allowance of 5 litres per head per day for gardens) as set out in the NPPG (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 56-014-20150327) and support the inclusion of this requirement in the Policy.

Thames Water promote water efficiency and have a number of water efficiency campaigns which aim to encourage their customers to save water at local levels. Further details are available on the our website via the following link:

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/Be-water-smart>

It is our understanding that the water efficiency standards of 105 litres per person per day is only applied through the building regulations where there is a planning condition requiring this standard (as set out at paragraph 2.8 of Part G2 of the Building Regulations). As the Thames Water area is defined as water stressed it is considered that such a condition should be attached as standard to all planning approvals for new residential development in

order to help ensure that the standard is effectively delivered through the building regulations.

Within Part G of Building Regulations, the 110 litres/person/day level can be achieved through either the 'Calculation Method' or the 'Fittings Approach' (Table 2.2). The Fittings Approach provides clear flow-rate and volume performance metrics for each water using device / fitting in new dwellings. Thames Water considers the Fittings Approach, as outlined in Table 2.2 of Part G, increases the confidence that water efficient devices will be installed in the new dwelling. Insight from our smart water metering programme shows that household built to the 110 litres/person/day level using the Calculation Method, did not achieve the intended water performance levels.

Proposed policy text:

“Development must be designed to be water efficient and reduce water consumption. Refurbishments and other non-domestic development will be expected to meet BREEAM water-efficiency credits. Residential development must not exceed a maximum water use of 105 litres per head per day (excluding the allowance of up to 5 litres for external water consumption) using the ‘Fittings Approach’ in Table 2.2 of Part G of Building Regulations. Planning conditions will be applied to new residential development to ensure that the water efficiency standards are met.”

Comments in relation to Flood Risk and SUDS

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that a sequential approach should be used by local planning authorities in areas known to be at risk from forms of flooding other than from river and sea, which includes "Flooding from Sewers".

When reviewing development and flood risk it is important to recognise that water and/or sewerage infrastructure may be required to be developed in flood risk areas. By their very nature water and sewage treatment works are located close or adjacent to rivers (to abstract water for treatment and supply or to discharge treated effluent). It is likely that these existing works will need to be upgraded or extended to provide the increase in treatment capacity required to service new development. Flood risk sustainability objectives should therefore accept that water and sewerage infrastructure development may be necessary in flood risk areas.

Flood risk sustainability objectives should also make reference to 'sewer flooding' and an acceptance that flooding can occur away from the flood plain as a result of development where off site sewerage infrastructure and capacity is not in place ahead of development.

With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, watercourses or surface water sewer. It is important to reduce the quantity of surface water entering the sewerage system in order to maximise the capacity for foul sewage to reduce the risk of sewer flooding.

Limiting the opportunity for surface water entering the foul and combined sewer networks is of critical importance to Thames Water. Thames Water have advocated an approach to SuDS that limits as far as possible the volume of and rate at which surface water enters the public sewer system. By doing this, SuDS have the potential to play an important role in helping to ensure the sewerage network has the capacity to cater for population growth and the effects of climate change.

SuDS not only help to mitigate flooding, they can also help to: improve water quality; provide opportunities for water efficiency; provide enhanced landscape and visual features; support

wildlife; and provide amenity and recreational benefits. The neighbourhood Plan should include a specific policy on SuDS in line with the following hierarchy:

“Developers should ensure that surface water run-off is managed as close to source as possible in line with the following drainage hierarchy:

1 store rainwater for later use

2 rainwater infiltration to ground at or close to source

3 rainwater attenuation in green infrastructure features for gradual release (for example green roofs, rain gardens)

4 discharge rainwater direct to a watercourse

5 controlled rainwater discharge to a surface water sewer/drain

6 controlled rainwater discharge to a combined sewer

It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.”

Development Sites

There are no new site allocations for us to comment upon. The level of information contained in the draft Neighbourhood Plan does not enable Thames Water to make an assessment of the impact the proposed development will have on the waste water/sewerage network infrastructure and sewage treatment works. To enable us to provide more specific comments we require details of the type and scale of development together with the anticipated phasing.

We recommend Developers contact Thames Water to discuss their development proposals by using our pre app service via the following link: <https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development/Water-and-wastewater-capacity>

It should be noted that in the event of an upgrade to our sewerage network assets being required, up to three years lead in time is usual to enable for the planning and delivery of the upgrade. As a developer has the automatic right to connect to our sewer network under the Water Industry Act we may also request a drainage planning condition if a network upgrade is required to ensure the infrastructure is in place ahead of occupation of the development. This will avoid adverse environmental impacts such as sewer flooding and / or water pollution.

We recommend developers attach the information we provide to their planning applications so that the Council and the wider public are assured wastewater and water supply matters for the development are being addressed.

We trust the above is satisfactory, but please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] on the above number if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]
Thames Water Property Town Planner

Response 4

****EXTERNAL****

FAO: Planning Policy, Vale of White Horse District Council

Our Reference: NH/26/16361

Re: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for your e-mail dated 20 May 2026, inviting National Highways to comment on the above consultation.

National Highways has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority, and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such Highways England works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

We will therefore be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the A34.

We have reviewed the above consultation and have 'No comments'.

Please continue to consult us on the issues concerning planning via our team's inbox: planningse@nationalhighways.co.uk

Regards

[REDACTED] (Assistant Spatial Planner (Area 3))

Operations Directorate, Spatial Planning Team South
National Highways | Ground Floor, Building 1000, Cathedral Square, Guildford,
GU2 7YL.

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Web: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/planning-and-the-strategic-road-network-in-england/>

This email may contain information which is confidential and is intended only for use of the recipient/s named above. If you are not an intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any copying, distribution, disclosure, reliance upon or other use of the contents of this email is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender and destroy it.

National Highways Limited | General enquiries: 0300 123 5000 | National Traffic Operations Centre, 3 Ridgeway, Quinton Business Park, Birmingham B32 1AF | <https://nationalhighways.co.uk> | info@nationalhighways.co.uk

Registered in England and Wales no 9346363 | Registered Office: Three Snowhill, Snowhill Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6GA

Consider the environment. Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

Please exercise caution before replying, opening attachments, or clicking any links unless you recognise the sender and are confident the content is safe.
If you have any doubts, or if the sender's name does not match the email address - contact the sender using an alternative, trusted method.

Response 5

By e-mail to: clerk@ardingtonandlockinge-pc.gov.uk

Our ref:
PL00800369

Your ref:



Direct Dial:

Mobile: 01223 582746

Dear Neighbourhood Forum,

Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Ardington and Lockinge Regulation 16

Thank you for consulting Historic England about your Regulation 16 draft Neighbourhood Plan. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment, Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully considered at all stages and levels of the local planning process.

Neighbourhood Plans are an important opportunity for local communities to set the agenda for their places, setting out what is important and why about different aspects of their parish or other area within the neighbourhood area boundary, and providing clear policy and guidance to readers – be they interested members of the public, planners or developers – regarding how the place should develop over the course of the plan period.

At this point we don't consider there is a need for Historic England to be involved in the detailed development of the strategy for your area, but we offer some general advice and guidance below, which may be of assistance. The conservation officer at your local Council will be the best placed person to assist you in the development of the Plan with respect to the historic environment and can help you to consider and clearly articulate how a strategy can address the area's heritage assets.

Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) sets out that Plans, including Neighbourhood Plans, should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In particular, this strategy needs to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all types of heritage asset where possible, the need for new

development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and ensure that it considers opportunities to use the existing historic environment to help reinforce this character of a place.

It is important that, as a minimum, the strategy you put together for your area safeguards those elements of your neighbourhood area that contribute to the significance of those assets. This will ensure that they can be enjoyed by future generations of the area and make sure your plan is in line with the requirements of national planning policy, as found in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The government's [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) on neighbourhood planning is clear that, where relevant, Neighbourhood Plans need to include enough information about local heritage to guide local authority planning decisions and to put broader strategic heritage policies from the local authority's local plan into action but at a *neighbourhood* scale. Your Neighbourhood Plan is therefore an important opportunity for a community to develop a positive strategy for the area's locally important heritage assets that aren't recognised at a national level through listing or scheduling. If appropriate this should include enough information about local non-designated heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest, locally listed buildings, or identified areas of historic landscape character. Your plan could, for instance, include a list of locally important neighbourhood heritage assets, (e.g. historic buildings, sites, views or places of importance to the local community) setting out what factors make them special. These elements can then be afforded a level of protection from inappropriate change through an appropriately worded policy in the plan. We refer you to our guidance on local heritage listing for further information: HE Advice Note 7 - local listing: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7>

The plan could also include consideration of any Grade II listed buildings or locally designated heritage assets which are at risk or in poor condition, and which could then be the focus of specific policies aimed at facilitating their enhancement. We would refer you to our guidance on writing effective neighbourhood plan policies, which can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/policy-writing/>

If you have not already done so, we would recommend that you speak to the staff at local authority archaeological advisory service who look after the Historic Environment Record and give advice on archaeological matters. They should be able to provide details of not only any designated heritage assets but also non designated locally important buildings, archaeological remains and landscapes. Some Historic Environment Records may be available to view on-line via the Heritage Gateway (www.heritagegateway.org.uk). It may also be useful to involve local voluntary groups such as a local Civic Society, local history groups, building

preservation trusts, etc. in the production of your Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in the early evidence gathering stages.

Your local authority might also be able to provide you with more general support in the production of your Neighbourhood Plan, including the provision of appropriate maps, data, and supporting documentation. There are also funding opportunities available from Locality that could allow the community to hire appropriate expertise to assist in such an undertaking. This could involve hiring a consultant to help in the production of the plan itself, or to undertake work that could form the evidence base for the plan. More information on this can be found on the My Community website here: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/funding-options/neighbourhood-planning/>.

The Conservation Area may have an appraisal document that would ordinarily set out what the character and appearance of the area is that should be preserved or enhanced. The neighbourhood plan is an opportunity for the community to clearly set out which elements of the character and appearance of the neighbourhood area as a whole are considered important, as well as provide specific policies that protect the positive elements, and address any areas that negatively affect that character and appearance. An historic environment section of your plan could include policies to achieve this and, if your Conservation Area does not have an up to date appraisal, these policies could be underpinned by a local character study or historic area assessment. This could be included as an appendix to your plan. Historic England's guidance notes for this process can be found here: [HE Advice Note 1 - conservation area designation, appraisal and management](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/), and here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/>. The funding opportunities available from Locality discussed above could also assist with having this work undertaken.

The NPPF (paragraphs 124 - 127) emphasises the importance placed by the government on good design, and this section sets out that planning (including Neighbourhood Plans) should, amongst other things, be based on clear objectives and a robust evidence base that shows an understanding and evaluation of an area, in this case the Parish of Capel. The policies of neighbourhood plans should also ensure that developments in the area establish a strong sense of place and respond to local character and history by reflecting the local identity of the place – for instance through the use of appropriate materials, and attractive design.

Your neighbourhood plan is also an opportunity for the community to designate Local Green Spaces, as encouraged by national planning policy. Green spaces are often integral to the character of place for any given area, and your plan could include policies that identified any deficiencies with existing green spaces or access to them or aimed at managing development around them. Locality has produced helpful guidance on this, which is available here:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-local-green-spaces>.

You can also use the neighbourhood plan process to identify any potential Assets of Community Value in the neighbourhood area. Assets of Community Value (ACV) can include things like local public houses, community facilities such as libraries and museums, or again green open spaces. Often these can be important elements of the local historic environment, and whether or not they are protected in other ways, designating them as an ACV can offer an additional level of control to the community with regard to how they are conserved. There is useful information on this process on Locality's website here: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/take-action/land-and-building-assets/assets-of-community-value-right-to-bid/> .

Communities that have a neighbourhood plan in force are entitled to claim 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds raised from development in their area. The Localism Act 2011 allows this CIL money to be used for the maintenance and on-going costs associated with a range of heritage assets including, for example, transport infrastructure such as historic bridges, green and social infrastructure such as historic parks and gardens, civic spaces, and public places. As a Qualifying Body, your neighbourhood forum can either have access to this money or influence how it is spent through the neighbourhood plan process, setting out a schedule of appropriate works for the money to be spent on. Historic England strongly recommends that the community therefore identifies the ways in which CIL can be used to facilitate the conservation of the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting, and sets this out in the neighbourhood plan. More information and guidance on this is available from Locality, here:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-infrastructure-levy-neighbourhood-planning-toolkit/>

If you are concerned about the impact of high levels of traffic through your area, particularly in rural areas, the "Traffic in Villages" toolkit developed by Hamilton-Baillie Associates in conjunction with Dorset AONB Partnership may be a useful resource to you.

Further information and guidance on how heritage can best be incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans has been produced by Historic England, including on evidence gathering, design advice and policy writing. Our webpage contains links to a number of other documents which your forum might find useful. These can help you to identify what it is about your area which makes it distinctive, and how you might go about ensuring that the character of the area is protected or improved through appropriate policy wording and a robust evidence base. This can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>.

Historic England Advice Note 11- Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment, which is freely available to download, also provides useful links to exemplar neighbourhood plans that may provide you with inspiration and assistance for your own. This can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

The following general guidance also published by Historic England may also be useful to the plan forum in preparing the neighbourhood plan or considering how best to develop a strategy for the conservation and management of heritage assets in the area. It may also be useful to provide links to some of these documents in the plan:

HE Advice Note 2 - making changes to heritage assets:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/making-changes-heritage-assets-advice-note-2/>

HE Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 - the setting of heritage assets:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>

If you are considering including Site Allocations for housing or other land use purposes in your neighbourhood plan, we would recommend you review the following two guidance documents, which may be of use:

HE Advice Note 3 - site allocations in local plans:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans>

HE Advice Note 8 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment : <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

We recommend the inclusion of a glossary containing relevant historic environment terminology contained in the NPPF, in addition to details about the additional legislative and policy protections that heritage assets and the historic environment in general enjoys.

Finally, we should like to stress that this advice is based on the information provided by Sandhurst Neighbourhood Forum I in their correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the proposed neighbourhood plan, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

If you have any queries about this matter or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@HistoricEngland.org.uk

Historic Places Advisor,

Response 6

Date: 02 July 2026
Our ref: 549808
Your ref: Ardington & Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan



Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ
T 0222 222 2222

Neighbourhood Planning Team
Vale of White Horse District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Ardington & Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 16 Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 20 May 2026.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England does not have any specific comments on this draft neighbourhood plan.

However, we refer you to the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and to the following information.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further information on protected species and development is included in [Natural England's Standing Advice on protected species](#).

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If an Strategic Environmental Assessment is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely
Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)¹ website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification**, **Ancient Woodland**, **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, **Local Nature Reserves**, [National Parks \(England\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-in-england), **National Trails**, **Priority Habitat Inventory**, **public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map)** and **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available from [the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres](http://theassociationoflocalenvironmentalrecordscentres.org/).

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)². Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)³.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)⁴ website and also from the [LandIS website](http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm)⁵, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)⁶ sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/)⁷ sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

¹ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

⁴ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

⁵ <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁷ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)⁸), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)⁹. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)¹⁰) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)¹¹ to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see [Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land](#)¹².

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment and should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you should follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and seek to ensure impacts on habitats are avoided or minimised before considering opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. You may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development and how these could contribute to biodiversity net gain and wider environmental goals.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.

Site allocations should be supported by a baseline assessment of biodiversity value. The statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) may be used to understand the number of biodiversity units present on allocated sites. For small development allocations the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of the statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. Further information on biodiversity net gain including [planning practice guidance](#) can be found [here](#)

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision. Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) sets out further information on green infrastructure standards and principles
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance](#)¹³).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks or on verges, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

Response 6

- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside the statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Response 7

Policy and Programmes

DIRECTOR: TIM ORUYE



Contact officer: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@southandvale.gov.uk

Tel: 01235 422600

02 July 2026

Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Development Plan – Comments under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (As Amended)

Vale of White Horse District Council has worked to support Ardington and Lockinge Parish Council in the preparation of their neighbourhood plan and compliments them on a very thoughtful plan.

In order to fulfil our duty to guide and assist, required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the council commented on the emerging Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) during the pre-submission consultation. We note that the qualifying body has taken the council's advice on board and addressed a number of the concerns previously raised.

We are committed to helping this plan succeed. To achieve this, we offer constructive comments on issues that are considered to require further consideration. To communicate these in a simple and positive manner; we produced a table containing an identification number for each comment, a description of the relevant section/policy of the NDP, our comments and, where possible, a recommendation.

Our comments at this stage are merely a constructive contribution to the process and should not be interpreted as the Council's formal view on whether the draft plan meets the basic conditions.

[REDACTED]

Planning Policy Team Leader (Neighbourhood)

Please note, the text in *italics* shows our recommended changes to the text, with any elements we recommend removing struck-through and any we recommend adding in **bold**.

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
1	Page 13 Paragraph 2.3.6	We recommend the following changes are made to the second sentence to ensure it accurately reflects the statutory process: <i>'Once 'made' (i.e. approved following-at referendum), this Neighbourhood Plan will also form a part of the Local Development Plan.'</i>
2	Page 19 The Vision	On the 25 March 2026, the Government brought into force two sections (S.98 and S.99) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA). Section 99 of the LURA amended the Basic Conditions that Neighbourhood Plans must satisfy, removing the requirement for the neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the development plan and replacing it with a requirement for the neighbourhood plan to not prevent housing development which is proposed in the development plan from taking place. The Vision for the neighbourhood plan includes references to the superseded basic condition as this was the relevant basic condition at the time the plan was drafted. We recommend the 'Vision' is amended to reflect this change to the basic conditions. There is also no requirement for a neighbourhood plan to comply with the strategic policies of a neighbouring district. We believe the intent here was to make reference to emerging policies in our Joint Local Plan; however, as this Plan has not yet been adopted, the relevant local plan for Ardington and Lockinge is the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Parts 1 and 2. To avoid any confusion and to align the text more closely with the Basic Conditions we recommend the text is modified as follows: <i>"To create a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Ardington and Lockinge that includes policies based on the outcomes of community engagement and consultation, is in general conformity with has regard to strategic policies in the Development Plan for the district and has regard to national planning policies and guidance. compliance with the core strategies set out in the relevant South and Vale Joint Local Development Plan</i>
3	Page 19 The	As mentioned above in regard to the Basic Conditions

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
	Aim	updates to avoid any confusion we recommend the 'Aim' is amended to ensure it accurately reflects the latest legislation. We therefore recommend the following changes: We recommend a series of modifications to the 'Aim' to reflect the updates to the basic conditions, to amend references to 'core strategies' to 'strategic policies and objectives' for clarity, and to remove references to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan as this is not the relevant local plan for Ardington and Lockinge. <i>'To create a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Ardington and Lockinge that includes policies based on the outcomes of community engagement and consultation, and compliance with that is aligned with and supports the strategic policies and objectives of the Development Plan for the district. the core strategies set out in relevant South and Vale Local Development Plan.</i>
4	Page 22 Figure 6: Location of settlements in Parish	It is unclear what the different elements shown on Figure 6 represent without the inclusion of a key. For clarity and accuracy, we therefore recommend that the figure is amended to include a key.
5	Page 28 - Figure 8	We are aware that, following comments made by the District Council at the Regulation 14 consultation, the qualifying body has provided further clarity on the methodology used to define the proposed settlement boundary. This additional information is welcomed. However, notwithstanding this additional explanation, the Council remains concerned that in several locations the proposed settlement boundary has been drawn very broadly, resulting in the inclusion of areas of undeveloped land that do not form part of the built-up area of the settlement. We note that the explanation for the drawing of the settlement boundary provided in the appendices sets out that certain areas have been included within the settlement boundary for the explicit purposes of supporting future development, specifically those areas to the north of the playground and to the south of Westfield House. Additionally, other large areas of open space on the edge of the settlement are included. Settlement boundaries are effective in distinguishing the built-up area of a settlement from the surrounding countryside. Core Policy 4 of the Vale of White Horse Local

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		Plan Part 1 sets out that within smaller villages, which Ardington is, limited infill may be appropriate within the existing built areas of these settlements and that development in the open countryside will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other relevant policies as set out in the Development Plan or national policy. Additionally, associated policies AL2 and AL3 of the neighbourhood plan sets out that within the defined settlement boundary, development proposals will be supported provided they constitute infill or the redevelopment of previously developed land, and outside of the boundary, development will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other relevant policies as set out in the development plan or national policy. It is therefore unclear why these areas have been included within the settlement boundary, particularly those identified in the evidence base as being suitable for development. The inclusion of these areas appears inconsistent with the relevant development plan policies, as development in these locations would not constitute infill development and these areas instead relate more closely to the surrounding countryside. We therefore recommend that the settlement boundary is amended to exclude these areas. If the intention is to support development in these locations, this should be pursued through a clear and transparent policy mechanism, supported by appropriate evidence and justification, such as the allocation of specific sites for development. The council would be happy to work with the parish council should the examiner consider it is necessary to refine the proposed boundaries to ensure that they contain only that land which can be considered part of the built-up area of the settlement, and exclude land which is undeveloped or whose use is more closely related to the countryside. We would also be happy to work with the group on allocating sites for development. It should be noted that Vale of White Horse District Council is currently working with South Oxfordshire District Council to prepare a new Local Plan, the Joint Local Plan (JLP), which is currently at examination. The emerging JLP proposes a revised settlement hierarchy, with some settlements changing their position within it. Ardington is currently classified as a Smaller Village in Core Policy 3 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1. Core Policy 4 of the Plan supports limited infill development

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		within smaller villages. Policy SP2 of the emerging JLP classifies Ardington as a Tier 4 settlement and proposes to limit infill development to settlements within Tiers 1–3 of the new settlement hierarchy. In response to a question submitted by the Inspectors during the initial hearings last year regarding potential conflicts between the JLP and neighbourhood plans, the Councils confirmed that, where a settlement boundary exists in a neighbourhood plan for a settlement outside of Tiers 1–3, Policy SP2 of the JLP would supersede that boundary once the JLP is adopted. As Ardington will fall outside of these tiers, if the Inspectors accept the Councils' proposed approach, the settlement boundary would be superseded at that point. Where there is a conflict between a Local Plan and a Neighbourhood Development Plan, the most recently adopted plan takes precedence, but only in respect of the specific area of conflict. Neighbourhood plan policies that do not conflict with the most up-to-date development plan policies continue to carry weight. The Joint Local Plan does not prohibit neighbourhood plans for settlements outside of the settlement hierarchy from being reviewed and updated with evidence to demonstrate that development beyond that planned for in the JLP would be appropriate. However, it is likely that robust evidence would be required to justify a settlement boundary in such circumstances. We would be happy to work with the qualifying body in the future to explore how a review of the plan could respond to the Joint Local Plan, should this be necessary.
6	<i>Pages 29</i> <i>Policy AL2</i> <i>Ardington</i> <i>Settlement</i> <i>Boundary</i>	We recommend that the policy is restructured to distinguish between the criteria that establishes the principle of development within the settlement boundary, and those that relate to the detailed assessment of development proposals. At present, all criteria are presented as a single list of requirements that proposals must satisfy in order to be supported. This approach risks making the policy unnecessarily rigid. We recommend splitting the policy up as follows to provide a clear distinction between the acceptability of development in principle, and the detailed considerations that should inform the design and assessment of proposals, subject to their scale nature and location:

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		<i>“The Neighbourhood Plan defines a settlement boundary for the village of Ardington as shown in red in Figure 8.</i> <i>Development proposals within the settlement boundary will be supported provided that they:</i> <i>a) constitute infill or redevelopment of a previously developed site;</i> <i>b) achieve high quality design reflecting the recommendations of the Ardington and Lockinge Design Code and the District Councils’ Joint Design Guide;</i> <i>c) are in accordance with relevant policies in the Local Development Plan.</i> <i>As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals within the settlement boundary should:</i> <i>a) reflect the character of the built environment in relation to height, scale and mass of the proposed building, which should be proportionate and sympathetic to the scale of neighbouring buildings;</i> <i>b) conserve the significance of heritage assets and their wider setting;</i> <i>c) do not unacceptably harm the existing amenity of neighbouring properties;</i> <i>d) do not harm the quality of the local environment; and</i> <i>e) take account of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan.”</i>
7	<i>Pages 26</i> <i>Figure 7</i> <i>Location of</i> <i>Open</i> <i>Countryside</i>	For clarity and accuracy, we recommend including a key within Figure 7 to clearly distinguish between land that falls within the settlement boundary and land that is considered to be open countryside.
8	Page 35 Figure 9: Map of Key Views	The view arrows for some of the Key Views appear to extend over land outside of the designated neighbourhood area boundary. As Neighbourhood Plan policies can only apply within the designated neighbourhood area, development proposals outside the neighbourhood area will not be subject to the policies contained within the Plan. As such, these views which look outside or begin outside the neighbourhood area boundary should either be modified so that they are contained within the neighbourhood area or deleted.

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		For clarity and consistency, key views that have been excluded from the evidence base and policy (e.g. Viewpoint 18) should be removed from the map. For clarity and accuracy, we also recommend including a key within Figure 9.
	Page 33 – Policy AL5 – Energy Efficiency	We recommend including a sentence to account for proposals which would unacceptably affect the significance of heritage assets and/or their settings: <i>“Development proposals for energy efficiency and renewable energy measures affecting a designated or non-designated heritage asset, or its setting, should be designed and implemented so as to avoid unacceptable harm to that significance, having regard to the relevant national and local heritage policies.”</i>
9	Page 36 Policy AL6- Key Views	The last sentence of Policy AL6 as currently written refers to development proposals having a “significant adverse impact on an identified important view”. This wording could be interpreted as seeking to prevent any noticeable change within a view, regardless of whether that change would adversely affect the characteristics that make that view important. We recommend that the policy instead focuses on the impact of development on the character and significance of the identified views. This approach would provide greater flexibility for decision-makers to assess the effect of development on the qualities that contribute to the importance of a view, whilst continuing to protect valued landscapes characteristics: <i>“Development proposals which would have a significant adverse impact on the local character of an identified important view (listed above) will not be supported.”</i> We also recommend including a clear reference, with a direct hyperlink, to the location of the justification and photographs for the key views within the policy or supporting text, to ensure it is evident where this information can be found within the appendices. The supporting text and evidence base accompanying the neighbourhood plan do not clearly explain what is significant about each of the identified views, or what qualities justify their inclusion. We recommend that further justification is included within section 3.2.7 of the Evidence Base to clearly set out the views significance and the characteristics that demonstrate why it is worthy of

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
10	Page 38- Policy AL7- Community Spaces and Landmarks	designation. We recommend a series of modifications to this policy to bring additional clarification and to ensure it can be applied consistently in decision-making. The phrase “loss of value to the community” is subjective and may be difficult to assess consistently. Additionally, the viability test in the final sentence may not be appropriate for all assets identified, especially those which do not operate as commercial or income-generating facilities. We recommend a modification to better align with the wording found in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2. We also recommend additional modification to ensure that the policy brings the clarity required by the NPPF: <i>“The following facilities and landmarks, as identified on Figure 10, are recognised as important community assets: Neighbourhood Plan recognises community assets and facilities in the following locations to which public access is permitted by the landowner. These assets are (Figure 10):</i> a) The Allotments, Ardington b) Playing Fields, Ardington c) Community Woodlands, Ardington d) Millennium Stones (in Community Woodlands) e) East Lockinge Allotments f) Parkinsons.me Garden, West Lockinge g) Community Orchard <i>Proposals to improve access to or enhance the use of such spaces will be supported.</i> <i>Development proposals that would result in the loss of an identified community asset will only be supported where it can be demonstrated through appropriate, detailed and robust evidence that</i> <i>1. It would lead to a significant improvement of the asset, or the replacement of the asset with one equally convenient to the local community,</i> <i>2. Where relevant, the asset is no longer economically viable for the established use, or</i> <i>3. The asset is no longer required.</i> <i>Where proposals are developed that involve a recognised community asset, there will be a presumption against any proposals that would lead to a loss of value to the community, unless it can clearly be demonstrated</i>

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		<i>that the operation of the asset, or the ongoing delivery of the community value of the asset, is no longer financially viable.</i>
11	Page 46 – Policy AL10 – Impact on Leisure Facilities And Policy AL11 – Enhancement of Leisure Facilities	We recommend combining these two policies together to reduce duplication as they largely cover the same issues. We recommend a series of modifications to this new combined policy to ensure it brings the clarity required by the NPPF by separating it into two sections, one which supports development that enhances existing leisure facilities, and one which resist their loss outside of specific circumstances. It is unclear what is meant by “appropriate locations” or how decision-makers would be expected to respond to this. We recommend a modification to set out that new leisure facilities will be supported where they are located close to the community and do not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area. We also recommend modifications to better align with the wording found in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 and recommend additional modification to ensure that the policy brings the clarity required by the NPPF: <i>“Development proposals that enhance, expand or improve the viability of an identified community leisure facility or identified village hub, as set out in paragraphs 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 will be supported. Development proposals for new leisure facilities in locations that are accessible to the local community and do not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area will be supported, particularly where they enhance the special character of the Conservation Area and/or the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.</i> <i>Development proposals that would result in the loss of an identified leisure facility or identified village hub will only be supported where it can be demonstrated through appropriate, detailed and robust evidence that:</i> <i>1. It would lead to a significant improvement of the asset, or the replacement of the asset with one equally convenient to the local community,</i> <i>2. Where relevant, the asset is no longer economically viable for the established use, or</i> <i>3. The asset is no longer required.</i>

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		<i>All proposals should accord with the other relevant policies of this Neighborhood Plan and the Development Plan.</i> <i>if they either enhance the viability of an existing community leisure facility or identified village hub (see section 8.2.1 and 8.2.2), or if they provide an acceptable replacement, provided they conform to the Land Use Policies (Policies AL1, AL2, and AL3) will not have an unacceptable impact on the local character of an identified important view (Policy AL6).</i> <i>Enhancement of existing leisure facilities or development of new leisure facilities in appropriate locations of the Parish will be encouraged, especially where it enhances the special character of the Conservation Area and/or the NWDNL."</i>
12	Page 47 Policy AL12 – Commercial Development	We recommend a series of modifications to this policy to ensure it brings the clarity required by the NPPF and can be applied consistently in decision-making. It is unclear what is meant by development being “appropriate to the existing local economy” in criterion a and how this would be assessed in practice. Additionally, we consider the focus on Use Class E may result in other forms of appropriate commercial development from being excluded. We recommend that the policy instead sets out that new commercial development should be appropriate to the scale and character of the parish. Criterion b requires development to be accessible by non-car modes. Whilst this objective is supported, the policy should recognize the rural nature of the parish and the practical limitations that may affect travel choices in some locations. We recommend that this requirement should be applied proportionately. Criterion e as currently drafted is overly restrictive. Core Policy 43 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan sets out that development proposals should avoid the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless it is demonstrated to be the most suitable choice from reasonable alternatives. It is unclear why a more restrictive approach which blocks development on these lands would be appropriate. We recommend the policy is modified to follow the approach established in the Local Plan. We recommend modifying the requirement for proposals

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		to “comply with” the Ardington and Lockinge Design Code and the District Council’s Joint Design Guide. The NPPF is clear that design codes are intended to guide and inform the design process rather than operate as inflexible compliance documents. Paragraph 139(a) states that planning authorities should give significant weight to development proposals which <i>“reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes”</i>. The use of the phrase “must comply” risks introducing an unnecessarily rigid approach that is inconsistent with the NPPF’s emphasis on using design codes to guide the design of proposals, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to the characteristics and constraints of individual sites. We therefore recommend that this wording is replaced by “demonstrate how the proposal responds to” as this would better reflect the role that the NPPF expects design codes to play whilst ensuring the documents remain an important consideration in the design and assessment of development proposals. We also recommend removing the specific reference to paragraph numbers in the NPPF as this document is periodically updated and these references may become outdated during the plan period. We also recommend a series of modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF to and to ensure that the policy can be applied consistently during decision-making. On the basis of the above, we recommend the following modifications: <i>“Development proposals for employment uses will be supported where they contribute to the diversification and sustainability of the local rural economy and are appropriate to the scale, character and setting of the parish.</i> <i>As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, employment, development proposals for employment uses should:</i> a) <i>Provide opportunities be appropriate to the existing local economy, and primarily focused</i>

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		upon providing workspace for existing or new small-scale businesses, including small-scale commercial, office, service and rural enterprise uses in use Class E (commercial, offices and services); b) be located and designed to maximise opportunities for access by walking, cycling and public transport, where practicable sustainably located so that they are accessible by non-car modes; c) avoid adverse impact to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the NWDNL; d) avoid unacceptable harm to heritage / local biodiversity / key views; e) avoid the unnecessary loss of not be located on the best and most versatile agricultural land (except where it forms part of the conversion of existing buildings); f) not involve the loss of a residential dwelling, unless appropriately justified; g) demonstrate how the proposal responds to comply with the Ardington and Lockinge Design Code and the District Councils' Joint Design Guide amenity principles so as not to cause nuisance to adjoining residential properties; h) comply with paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework to avoid unacceptable impact on highway safety or cause severe cumulative impacts on the road network that could not be mitigated; and i) comply with Policy AL9 to protect dark night skies" Our Economic Development Team note the relatively large number of jobs within the parish, the support for the Lockinge Estate within the neighbourhood plan and the positive support for businesses and employment, including positive measures to attempt to alleviate concerns around impact of traffic on the local area.
13	Page 48- Policy AL13- Business in Residential Properties	As with the above policy, we recommend modifying the requirement for proposals to "comply with" the Ardington and Lockinge Design Code and the District Council's Joint Design Guide. The use of the phrase "must comply" risks introducing an unnecessarily rigid approach that is inconsistent with the NPPF's emphasis on using design codes to guide the design of proposals, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to the characteristics and

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		constraints of individual sites. We therefore recommend that this wording is replaced by “demonstrate how the proposal responds to” as this would better reflect the role that the NPPF expects design codes to play whilst ensuring the documents remain an important consideration in the design and assessment of development proposals. We also recommend removing the specific reference to paragraph numbers in the NPPF as this document is periodically updated and these references may become outdated during the plan period. We also recommend a series of modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF to and to ensure that the policy can be applied consistently during decision-making: <i>“Development proposals to extend existing residential properties to create workspaces for businesses will be supported, provided they:</i> <i>a) comply with the relevant Neighbourhood Plan and Development Plan policies;</i> <i>b) demonstrate how the proposal responds to comply with the <i>Ardington and Lockinge Design Code and the District Councils’ Joint Design Guide amenity principles so as not to cause nuisance to adjoining residential properties;</i></i> <i>c) comply with paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework to avoid unacceptable impact on highway safety or cause severe cumulative impacts on the road network that could not be mitigated”</i>
14	General Comment	There is no specific heritage policy within the plan. However, the Design Code demonstrates a strong focus on heritage matters, including a clear and informative introduction on the settlement history and an overview of its current heritage assets. This usefully highlights key features such as listed buildings and the Ardington and East Lockinge conservation area. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that the Plan includes a dedicated heritage policy to provide clear and consistent decision-making support. We recommend a new policy based on Policy BS8 in the adopted Beckley and Stowood NDP, with appropriate reference to the Design Code, as detailed below:

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		<i>'PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE</i> <i>The parish's designated historic heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground, including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas, will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.</i> <i>The effect of a development proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the planning application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be taken having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.</i> <i>Development proposals should have regard to the Development Plan, the Joint Design Code and the Ardington and Lockinge the Design Code'</i>
15	Design Code	The District Council welcomes the preparation of a Design Code for Ardington and Lockinge and the document will assist applicants and decision makers in understanding the distinctive qualities of the parish. However, we do have concerns regarding some of the codes within this document. Specifically, throughout the document there is repeated use mandatory wording, such as "must", in regard to design. Whilst mandatory wording is appropriate in principle where it reflects statutory requirements or other objective planning requirements, or where it relates to requirements which are evidence-based, locally justified and capable of consistent application through the development management process, some of the mandatory requirements within the Design Code relate to matters of architectural preference or detailed design judgement rather than fundamental design requirements. Specific examples of this include Code AL.01 which sets out that development proposals within the setting of listed buildings "must preserve and enhance the significance of the asset." This requirement exceeds the expectations established by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the NPPF. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out that "in considering whether to grant planning

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority... shall have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF sets out that heritage assets “should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance...”. As there is no requirement for development affecting a listed building to provide enhancement, and no evidence provided as to why a locally bespoke approach would be appropriate, we recommend amending the wording along the following lines: <i>“New development within the setting of a listed building, as identified above, should must preserve and enhance the significance of the heritage asset, including its setting, and where appropriate should take opportunities to better reveal or enhance that significance.”</i> We recommend that this document is reviewed and updated to distinguish more clearly between mandatory requirements and guidance. The District Council would be happy to provide the Examiner with a list of all recommended modifications to the Design Code if helpful and would be happy to work with the qualifying body to identify alternative wording. Our Equalities Team also recommend that the Design Code gives further consideration to the provision and integration of play areas and clear wayfinding and recommend considering the Inclusive Mobility Guide.
16	General comment:	Our Climate and Biodiversity Team note the clear regard for climate change and nature recovery within the Plan and Design Code, with codes which give consideration to low and net zero carbon buildings, electric vehicle charging points, sustainable drainage systems and flood resilience and the conservation of key habitats as key examples.
17	General comment:	Our Infrastructure Implementation and Funding Team have recommended that the qualifying body may wish to build on the work undertaken by developing a prioritised table/list of more specific project proposals which clearly set out the scope of each project, anticipated cost of delivery, identified funding sources, feasibility and an indication of whether the projects are required to be delivered in the short, medium or long term. Producing a list will ensure that, when funding becomes available, the community is ready with an established list of priorities and proposals for the funding to

Ref.	Section/Policy	Comment/Recommendation
		be used on. It is also beneficial for the District Council and other bodies to know which projects have genuine community support and also encourages transparency and fairness. The District Council would be happy to support the qualifying body in undertaking this work.
18	General comment:	Our Equalities Team have recommended that the Plan includes more explicit guidance and protection for the protected characteristics to ensure the community areas are accessible to the public and a priority to design. This could be achieved through the neighbourhood plan's design code by including specific guidance relating to accessibility, safety and ease of movement for all users. Incorporating such guidance would support the delivery of well-designed places while helping to ensure that equality considerations are embedded in the design process.

**The following
representations were
received after the publicity
period**

Response 8



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING CONSULTATION:

District: Vale of the White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan 2026 – 2041 Regulation
16 (Submission Document) Consultation

Annexes to the report contain officer advice.

Overall View of Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan.

The County Council welcomes references to the emerging South and Vale Joint Local Plan and acknowledges the restrictions attributed to the rural nature of the Neighbourhood Planning area.

Several of our comments from the previous round of consultation have been taken on board by the Parish, which is welcomed, and references have been made to the Oxfordshire County Council Parking Standards for New Developments, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the proposed White Horse Reservoir NSIP.

Detailed comments are provided in Annex 1 to this letter, particularly in regard to transport, flood risk, minerals and waste, public health and digital infrastructure matters.

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Strategic Planner

Date: 25 June 2026

ANNEX 1
OFFICER ADVICE

District: Vale of White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan 2026 – 2041 Regulation 16 (Submission Document) Consultation

Team: Strategic Planning

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Strategic Planner

Date: 19/06/26

Policy AL4:

As mentioned in our regulation 14 response, this policy should reference Oxfordshire County Council's Parking Standards for new developments. This policy has now been updated. Referencing County wide policies on parking will give Policy AL4 a stronger basis and ensures that any policies within the Neighbourhood Plan are consistent with other relevant policies across the County.

Policy AL6 and AL8

We note the inclusion of references to the White Horse Reservoir project (formerly known as SESRO).

District: Vale of White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan 2025 – 2041 (Pre-Submission Document)

Team: Transport Policy and Strategy

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Assistant Transport Planner

Date: 18/06/2026

Comments

General comments:

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to review and comment on the updated version of this neighbourhood plan.

We have provided a few suggested comments below.

Section 2.2 County Policy:

Under the 'Council Policy' section, the plan states "*OCC is the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for the plan area*". We recommend that this section be updated to note that OCC is also the Highway Authority for the plan area too.

Additionally, we would also recommend referring to the LTCP and the Movement and Place Plan Programme (MAP Plan), specifically the recently adopted Science Vale MAP Plan which this plan falls within.

Policy AL4:

While the policy refers to the Vale of White Horse District Council's (VoWHDC) target to achieve a carbon neutral district by 2045, it would also be useful if the plan referred to [OCC's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan \(LTCP\)](#) which also expresses targets of a net zero transport network by 2040. While this policy discusses the target of carbon neutrality with regards to new developments, the mention of carbon neutrality in relation to car parking and the shared net-zero ambitions, would make the LTCP a good point of reference also. Relevant policies from the Science Vale MAP Plan should also be referenced.

Policy AL7:

This policy expresses the importance of maintaining community spaces and landscapes. Referral to the adopted [Science Vale Movement and Place \(MAP\) Plan](#), which the parish of Ardington and Lockinge falls into the boundary of, would be important. The plan discusses the need to uphold key community spaces with the goal of enhancing public realm and creating a sense of place in settlement centres within the MAP Plan area.

Glossary:

Following reference to the *LTCP* and *Science Vale MAP Plan*, if included, we would suggest the inclusion of the two policies into both the 'Glossary' and 'Relevant Policies' section of this Neighbourhood Plan.

District: Vale of White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16
(Submission) Consultation

Team: Flood Risk Management

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Flood Risk Management Officer

Date: 01/06/26

Comments

- We suggest the neighbourhood plan include a line to on the LLFA's Section 19 Flood Investigation reports, ensuring these are checked against any proposed development site. These can be found on the [Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit](#).
- We have 1 flood incident recorded for the location of the neighbourhood plan, in OX12 8P. It should however be noted that a lack of recorded flood incidents does not mean flooding has not occurred in the area before, but rather we don't have a record of any events. Any developments need to consider the most up to date flood information available, including any recorded flood incidents. If more information is required about the flooding events, please contact the Flood Risk Management Team.
- The NP makes no reference to groundwater flood risk. Whilst there are no publicly available flood risk maps for groundwater, we may hold further information on this flood risk type and may be able to advise further, including locations or other sources of information. As such flooding from the groundwater source could be included in the NP and if needed linking to the groundwater page on the [Flood Toolkit](#).
- There is no reference within the document to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which is the evidence base for the local plan.
- There are no Flood Risk maps included in the NP and these may aid the reader visualise flood risk hotspots across the area. The NP may benefit from a section on Flood Risk where maps could be included such as the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW), Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Seas (RoFRS) and Historic Flooding maps could be included, highlighting the areas where risk is highest. The Flood Zone map from the Flood Map for Planning could also be included as this contains undefended modelled outlines, or defended where they are greater, alongside records of historic flooding either via the recorded flood outlines or historic flood outlines map. This might be worth checking with the Environment Agency as this is their data.
- The LPA should assure themselves that the NP meets its own policies.

- The NP could refer more fully to the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems, as well as the OCC Local Standards and Guidance for SuDS, as a signposting exercise for further guidance on the requirements to drain surface water from new developments.

District: Vale of the White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan Reg 16

Team: Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Principal Planning Officer - Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy

Date: 22/06/2026

Comments

The Minerals and Waste Policy team requests that reference to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is deleted from the text as only the Core Strategy is currently part of the development plan. We welcome reference to County Matter Planning.

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan 2026 – 2041

(Submission Draft)

Team: Public Health

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Health Improvement Practitioner

Date: 19/06/2026

Comments

The Public Health Team welcomes the opportunity to comment on this submission draft of the Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan. Our following comments focus on the health and wellbeing elements of the document and how the Plan can help to improve health outcomes in the local community.

There are a number of key areas where health could be woven into the existing Plan, both directly and indirectly.

The Vision and Objectives sections currently do not explicitly mention health, so we recommend adding a simple clause such as “to support the health and wellbeing of residents and reduce health inequalities”.

There are currently a variety of statistics listed which state the demographics of the parish, largely reliant on Census data. We would propose adding a short health-focused baseline drawing on data from the [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#). This allows for a more granular investigation of the local health profile, uncovering some potential health inequalities and areas for further action. This could then enable the Plan to identify health priorities, such as ageing population, rural isolation and access to services.

In Policy AL4 – Resource and Access, an additional point should include: development should prioritise active travel, including safe walking and cycling routes connecting settlements and facilities.

In Policy AL7 – Community Spaces and Landmarks, consider adding a sentence which confirms the health benefits of such spaces e.g. these spaces contribute to physical activity, mental wellbeing, social cohesion, and access to locally grown food.

In the section which includes Policies AL10 and AL11, a simple addition needs to be added to reinforce the health benefits of protecting and improving leisure facilities: facilities play a key role in supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing social isolation.

While the selection of targets and indicators within Appendix 3: Monitoring and Review Framework are supported, we wish to see the incorporation of some health-specific ones such as those which measure the use of green spaces, walking and cycling uptake, and the retention or improvement of existing community assets.

District: Vale of White Horse

Consultation: Ardington and Lockinge Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16
(Submission) Consultation

Team: Digital Infrastructure Programme Team

Officer's Name: [REDACTED]

Officer's Title: Technical Lead

Date: 28/05/26

Comments

The Plan is broadly supported; however, it could be strengthened in relation to digital infrastructure.

While Policy AL4 appropriately requires development proposals to provide access to high quality communications infrastructure, there is limited recognition elsewhere in the Plan of the role that digital connectivity plays in supporting the Parish's economic, social and environmental objectives.

The evidence within the Plan highlights:

- the presence of professional and research-based businesses,
- the increasing prevalence of home working enabled by technology, and
- the ongoing conversion and use of rural buildings for office and commercial purposes.

These factors demonstrate that reliable, high-quality digital connectivity is essential infrastructure for the Parish, particularly in a rural context. However, this is not consistently reflected in the policy framework.

It is recommended that the Plan is strengthened by:

1. Expanding Policy AL4 to:
 - clarify expectations for high-quality, future-proofed digital infrastructure (e.g. Gigabit capable fibre connectivity and 5G Stand Alone mobile connectivity where available);
2. Recognising digital infrastructure as a key enabler of:
 - rural economic growth,
 - home working and local employment, and
 - sustainable development outcomes;
3. Ensuring that support for any the construction of any new telecommunications infrastructure (particularly for mobile connectivity) is explicitly stated:
 - facilitate early provision of high-quality connectivity, rather than retrofitting;
4. Considering reference to digital infrastructure within supporting text for:
 - employment and business policies, and
 - sustainable development objectives.

This would better align the Plan with national policy expectations for supporting economic growth and modern infrastructure in rural areas, while ensuring the Parish is resilient to future technological and service demands.