

Reedham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038

**A report to Broadland District Council and the
Broads Authority on the Reedham Neighbourhood
Development Plan**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Broadland District Council and the Broads Authority in November 2023 to carry out the independent examination of the Reedham Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 December 2023.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on two matters. The first is the proposed designation of a series of Local Green Spaces. The second is ensuring high standards of design.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum area should be the same area as the designated neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
27 March 2024

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Reedham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Broadland District Council (BDC) and The Broads Authority (BA) by Reedham Parish Council (RPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises as from my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance and that new development is designed in a positive way.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then become part of the wider development plan and be used to determine planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by BDC, with the consent of the BA and RPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of BDC, the BA and RPC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have 41 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level and more recently as an independent examiner. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

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

Other examination matters

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

3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Design Guide
- the Local Green Space Assessment
- the Key Viewpoints Assessment
- the SEA/HRA screening report (June 2023).
- the representations made to the Plan.
- RPC's responses to the clarification note.
- RPC's comments on the feedback from Mr Mutton, a member of the Plan's Steering Group;
- the adopted Joint Core Strategy 2011.
- the Broadland Development Management Development Plan Document 2015.
- the Broadland Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2016.
- the adopted Broads Local Plan 2019.
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 December 2023. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations. I was assisted in this process by the comprehensive nature of many of the representations.

3.4 The Basic Conditions Statement comments about the relationship of the Plan with the 2021 version of the NPPF. The NPPF was updated in September and December 2023 after the Plan had been submitted. For clarity I have assessed the Plan against the December 2023 version of the NPPF.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2012, RPC has prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies.
- 4.3 The Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. They included early engagement with the community, a call for sites and liaison with the owners of the proposed local green spaces. The Statement summarises the comments received from these exercises and how they fed into the pre-submission Plan. This is best practice.
- 4.4 The Statement also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (March to April 2023). The comments received are listed along with commentary about the way in which the Plan was refined because of this process.
- 4.5 One of the steering group members commented to BDC about the accuracy and integrity of RPC's response to the clarification note on Policy 1 (Middle Field). This matter is addressed in more detail in paragraphs 7.17 to 7.22 of this report. Whilst matters of this nature are unusual, I am not persuaded that the issue raised undermines the wider integrity of the consultation process and the way in which the Plan was prepared. RPC's commentary on the matter is very clear. In any event the steering group exists to advise RPC (in its capacity as the qualifying body) on the production of the Plan. Plainly the potential exists for different views to exist either with a steering group or within the relevant qualifying body (here RPC). Moreover, the neighbourhood plan process includes a referendum which allows the community to express its views on the Plan after it has been through the examination process.
- 4.6 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. BDC and BA has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.7 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by BDC and BA. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:

- Sport England
- SSE
- National Highways
- Water Management Alliance
- Network Rail
- Marine Management Organisation
- Norfolk Constabulary
- Historic England
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- Anglian Water
- Broadland District Council
- Natural England
- The Broads Authority
- Norfolk County Council

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

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Reedham. Its population in 2011 was 1207 persons living in 550 households. The neighbourhood area is located on the north bank of the River Yare, 20km east of Norwich, 12km west of Great Yarmouth and the same distance from Lowestoft. The parish includes an area of marshland stretching northeast along the River Yare to the Berney Arms Public House. It was designated as a neighbourhood area in April 2019.
- 5.2 The neighbourhood area is both interesting and diverse. It includes a historic core around the River Yare, and an extensive agricultural hinterland to the north and north-east. Reedham Ferry lies to the west of the village. It is a chain ferry and the only crossing on the River Yare between Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Tourism is now the principal economic activity and brings business to local traders and benefits the wider parish. The Wherry Lines railway between Norwich and Lowestoft crosses the river at the swing bridge and the railway station provides connections to Norwich, Lowestoft, and Great Yarmouth via the isolated marshland hamlet of Berney Arms. The Wherryman's Way, a 35-mile recreational walk between Norwich and Great Yarmouth, follows the river and runs along Reedham Riverside. The parish includes a marina and boatyard.
- 5.3 The village itself is focused on the River Yare. Riverside is the focus for the village and includes a series of tourism-related businesses. The Hills sits to the immediate north and includes other commercial and community uses. Most of the village is constrained by the railway line to the north. Nevertheless, the Village Hall and the associated Recreation Ground provide important community facilities to the north of the railway line. In addition, they provide an attractive entrance to the village from the north.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The Basic Conditions Statement sets out the comprehensive nature of the development plan context for the neighbourhood area. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for the Greater Norwich Area (Broadland, Norwich, and South Norfolk) was adopted in 2014. The Broadland Development Management Development Plan Document (BDMDPD) was adopted in 2015. The Broadland Site Allocations Development Plan Document (BSADPD) was adopted in 2016.
- 5.5 In the adopted JCS Reedham is identified as a Service Village (Policy 15). In Service Villages land will be allocated for small-scale housing development within a range of 10-20 dwellings subject to form and character and appropriate small-scale employment or service development will be encouraged. Policy 15 also advises that existing local shops and services will be protected. The BSADPD, allocated RED1- Land at Station Road in Reedham. The site has now delivered 24 dwellings.

- 5.6 The Joint Core Strategy will be replaced by the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). The GNLP is now well-advanced. The Inspectors' report has now been received and the three local planning authorities will be considering the adoption of the report later this month. In the emerging GNLP Reedham falls within the Village Clusters in Broadland. Appendix 5 of that Plan advises that Reedham will provide a total of between 40 and 60 dwellings in new site allocations. Reedham is a Village Cluster on its own (rather than with other settlements) as the school catchment does not extend to adjoining villages. Two sites are identified as preferred options in the Plan to deliver the growth for housing. The first is GNLP1001- Land to East of Station Road (30 dwellings). The second is GNLP3003- Mill Road (30 dwellings).
- 5.7 In addition, the Local Plan for the Broads (BLP) was adopted in 2019. The following strategic policies have an important bearing on the submitted neighbourhood plan:
- Strategic Policy 2: Strategic flood risk policy
 - Strategic Policy 3: Climate change
 - Strategic Policy 5: Historic environment
 - Strategic Policy 6: Biodiversity
 - Strategic Policy 7: Landscape Character
 - Strategic Policy 8: Getting to and about the Broads
 - Strategic Policy 9: Recreational access around the Broads
- 5.8 Figure 3 of the Basic Conditions Statement assesses the policies in the submitted Plan against this adopted and emerging development plan context.
- 5.9 On the one hand, the development plan context for the neighbourhood area is complex. On the other hand, RPC has carefully produced a Plan which seeks to complement the existing and emerging development plans.
- 5.10 In addition the submitted Plan has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.11 I visited the neighbourhood area on 19 December 2023. I approached it from Acle to the north. This helped me to understand its position in general and its accessibility to the strategic road network.
- 5.12 I looked initially at the part of the parish around The Ferry. I saw the importance of the ferry itself and the way in which The Ferry Inn dominated the landscape.
- 5.13 I then looked at Middle Field from Cliff Close. I saw its scale and the significance of the footpath crossing from the south-east to the north-west
- 5.14 I then looked at the proposed local green space 2 (land adjacent to the War Memorial) and local green space 3 (Green area in front of Quay Terrace). At the first site I saw the separate memorial to the crews of 385 Bomb Group US Air Force.

- 5.15 I saw the importance of Riverside to the parish. I also saw the specific importance of the Post Office, the Lord Nelsons public house, and Cannell's by the River.
- 5.16 I then looked at the railway station. Its significance to the village was self-evident.
- 5.17 Thereafter I looked at the Village Hall and the associated Playing Fields.
- 5.18 I left the neighbourhood area by driving to Brundall. This highlighted the way in which the neighbourhood area connected with the wider River Yare valley.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.
- 6.2 As part of this process, I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
 - be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

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

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Reedham Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the local plan context in both Broadland District and the Broads Authority (as described in Section 5 of this report);
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic

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

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

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. The submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes a policy for rural farm buildings (Policy 14). In the social role, it includes policies on the mix of houses and affordability (Policies 2 and 3), on local green spaces (Policy 8), and on community facilities (Policies 12 and 13). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has policies on design (Policy 4), on biodiversity (Policy 7), and on views (Policy 9). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

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

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, RPC undertook a screening exercise in June 2023 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 RPC prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. It assesses the potential impact of the Plan's policies on the following protected sites within the neighbourhood area:
- Broadland SPA/Ramsar;
 - Breydon Water SPA/Ramsar; and
 - The Broads SAC.

The work also assessed the potential impact of the Plan's policies on other protected sites within 20km of the neighbourhood area

- 6.16 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on these protected sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns about these matters. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of neighbourhood plan regulations.

Human Rights

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

Summary

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

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the Plan area. The wider community and RPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to respond to Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans should address the development and use of land. The Plan includes a series of non-land use Community Actions.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan. The Actions are considered thereafter.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the Plan's policies.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial parts of the Plan

- 7.8 The Plan is well-organised and presented. It has been prepared with much attention to detail and local pride. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text.
- 7.9 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies. The Introduction sets the scene for the Plan. It also provides information about the neighbourhood area. It provides interesting details which help to set the scene for the policies.
- 7.10 This part of the Plan also comments about the concept of neighbourhood plans. This helps set the scene for the wider Plan.
- 7.11 There are also comments about the way in which the Plan was prepared. The breakdown of events overlaps with the details in the Consultation Statement. It also comments about local planning policies which influenced the work on the Plan.
- 7.12 The Introduction properly identifies the neighbourhood area (on Figure 1). Whilst the front cover of the Plan sets out the Plan period, I recommend that the matter is addressed in the Plan itself so that it meets the prescribed conditions (as set out in paragraph 2.6 of this report).

At the end of paragraph 10 add 'The Plan period is 2022 to 2038 so that it coincides with the wider development plan.'

- 7.13 There are also details about the Vision and eight objectives for the parish. The Vision is as follows:

'Reedham is a vibrant community that retains its rural identity which is cherished by local people and tourists. Any future development will be sensitive to the rural nature of the settlement as well as the beauty and tranquillity Reedham has to offer. Development will be of a high-quality design and tailored to meet the needs of the local community.'

- 7.14 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

Policy 1: Reedham Middle Field

- 7.15 This policy relates to Reedham Middle Field. The Plan advises that the settlement is split into two distinct parts. The first is around Riverside and The Hills, and the second around The Havaker and rail station. It advises that the two distinct areas are separated by what is known locally as 'Middle Field'. The Plan comments that the Field itself creates a feeling of openness that is important to the character of the village. It also advises that a Public Right of Way was recently designated across Middle Field as part of development at Cliff Close, as a way of improving connectivity to the Rail Station. The Plan also advises that the landowner grows a variety of wildflowers on the field, and there are open views towards the church to the north-east, and across the river and marshes to the south.
- 7.16 The policy comments that Middle Field remain open unless development proposals are for a community use. It also advises that appropriate community uses that will be supported on Middle Field include schemes such as a new village hall, new village school or a new central playing field.
- 7.17 The details of the policy generated a comprehensive representation from the owner of Middle Field. In summary it comments:

'it is visually evident that there is a ring of continual residential development abutting the southern boundary of Middle Field. As such, the principle of a separation already loses weight, and development should ultimately be placed in sustainable locations where it is most appropriate to meet identified needs (as per Paragraph 73 of the NPPF). If Middle Field is identified as a sustainable location that could meet the needs of Reedham in the future, it should be considered for development without the constraint that this designation may pose.'

Middle Field presents itself as a suitable alternative to (the deleted proposed G3003 housing site in the emerging GNLP) which could accommodate residential development on a slightly larger scale, or indeed other forms of development, and its future development potential should therefore not be restricted or limited to particular community uses

Ultimately, if Middle Field is deemed an appropriate location for either the development of community facilities, residential dwellings, or employment uses that will meet the local needs of Reedham, it should not be restricted to the limited provision of community facilities based on maintaining separation.

Middle Field presents itself as a sustainable opportunity for future development as it will maintain the outer edges of Reedham and prevent outward sprawl into neighbouring settlements, whilst also sustaining the village identity. Equally, situating development centrally would provide a focal point for local residents and create a more cohesive and accessible community, as desired by the JCS spatial vision.'

- 7.18 In response to clarification note, RPC commented that:

'Planning is always a balance between harm and benefits and between different objectives. Although the community would like to see Middle Field retained for its openness, some impact on this could be acceptable when balanced against overriding community benefits afforded by the provision of a new village hall or school.'

- 7.19 RPC also advised that there are no costed proposals for the types of development suggested in the policy.

- 7.20 Following the preparation of the response by RPC, Mr Mutton, a member of the Plan's Steering Group, advised BDC that:

the recent reply from the Steering Group to [the examiner] is misleading. It says 'the community' felt that it would like to see Middle Field retained for its openness'. It is not the community; it is 3 members of the Steering Group.

- 7.21 I sought RPC's comments on Mr Mutton's comments. Its response refined the comments to read as follows:

'Planning is always a balance between harm and benefits and between different objectives. Although the steering group on behalf of the community would like to see Middle Field retained for its openness, some impact on this could be acceptable when balanced against overriding community benefits afforded by the provision of a new village hall or school.'

- 7.22 For the purposes of this examination, I have taken RPC's comments above to be the definitive statement on this matter. This acknowledges its status as the qualifying body.

- 7.23 BDC commented extensively on the policy in its representation to the submitted Plan as follows:

'The Council notes that the previous Reedham Village Gap policy has been amended and retitled Reedham Middle Field. The Council welcomes the positive policy supporting future community uses on this site. However, the Council has not been able to identify that clear evidence has been provided demonstrating that there is a reasonable prospect that such uses would be brought forward on the land. As such, it is unclear whether this element of the policy can be considered to be deliverable in accordance with Paragraph 16 (a) of the NPPF.'

Despite the changes to the policy, it is clear that one of the key intentions of the policy is to prevent future development on Middle Field beyond that allowable as community uses.

As set out in the Council's previous responses, such a substantial restriction on development should be justified on the basis of equally robust and compelling justification. In the Council's view such justification should as a minimum comply with the requirements for the designation of a local green space. As set out in paragraph 101 of the NPPF, this would need to include a demonstration that the designation is consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.

Overall, the Council remains concerned that the policy is not underpinned by adequate and proportionate evidence that justifies the policy as required by paragraph 31 of the NPPF. As such, on the basis of the information that the Council has been able to identify, it does not consider that the policy meets the requirements of the basic conditions and should be deleted or significantly revised.'

- 7.24 Plainly the policy has generated considerable interest. I looked at Middle Field carefully during the visit. I saw its location in relation to the built form of the two elements of the settlement boundary, its current condition, and the way in which the footpath cuts across the Field.
- 7.25 As submitted, the policy has a hybrid format based around its two related parts. The first highlights the separation which Middle Field brings to the two distinct parts of the village. The second provides support for the development of community uses.
- 7.26 On the first matter, I saw during the visit that Middle Field provides a high degree of separation between the more modern parts of the village to the north of the River Yare and The Hills. However, the Plan provides no detailed evidence to justify the approach in the policy that it should remain open to maintain the distinction between the different elements of the village. In addition, there is no evidence in the Plan about the appropriateness or otherwise of Middle Field acting as a specific 'gap' beyond its exclusion from either of the two separate Settlement Boundaries for the village (which are to the immediate east and west of Middle Field). Furthermore, there is no evidence that Middle Field was assessed as a potential Local Green Space and which are designated to retain the openness of green spaces.
- 7.27 On the second matter, RPC advised in its response to the clarification note that there were no costed proposals for the development of community facilities on the site. In addition, the representation from the owner of Middle Field does not offer any direct support for the proposed development or an indication about the extent to which the site would be released for community purposes. In this context the policy does not have regard to paragraph 16b) of the NPPF. Whilst it is aspirational, there is no evidence that its proposals for community use are deliverable. Finally, there is an inherent tension between the policy's intention to retain the openness of Middle Field on the one hand with its support for certain types new development on the other hand.

- 7.28 Taking account of all the information I recommend that the policy is deleted from the Plan. Middle Field is not within the Settlement Boundary for Reedham and there is no evidence to suggest that the types of uses proposed in the policy would be capable of being delivered in the Plan period. In addition, any proposals for the delivery of recreational or community facilities on Middle Field within the Plan period could be determined based on the wider package of development plan policies.
- 7.29 Plainly the policy has evolved as the Plan was being prepared and has generated a level of scrutiny during the examination. For clarity I have examined the policy against the basic conditions as it appears within the submitted Plan. No other conclusions should be drawn from my recommended modifications including the merits or otherwise of the types of development mentioned in the representation made to the Plan by Savills on behalf of the owner of Middle Field.

Delete the policy

Delete paragraphs 39-42 and Figures 6 and 7

Housing policies – General comments

- 7.30 Whilst the Plan does not allocate sites for housing development it includes general policies on housing mix (Policy 2) and on affordable housing (Policy 3). I comment separately on the two policies shortly. In general terms they take an appropriate approach to these matters.
- 7.31 In its comments on the submitted Plan BDC reaffirms factual errors within the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). It advises that:
- ‘the comments related to statements in the executive summary, initially statement 6, but also on subsequent occasions throughout the document, and therefore any calculations that use the percentage, e.g., statement 7 in the executive summary and throughout, which referred to 40% of new housing being affordable rather than the 33% in Joint Core Strategy or 28% as per the previous SHMA (or reverting back to 33% as per the emerging Local Plan).’*
- 7.32 BDC then advised that:
- ‘leaving the HNA as is, results in a lack of clarity and consistency between the two documents. As these are factual errors within the evidence document, these should be corrected. We are aware through our work with other Qualifying Bodies that errors of this nature have been corrected via a subsequent approach to AECOM and believe that this should also be the case here to ensure the clarity required by paragraph 16(d) of the NPPF is achieved. If, for whatever reason, it is not possible for AECOM to update the document then an Errata schedule should be appended to the start of the report to address any factual errors or inconsistencies.’*
- 7.33 In its response to the clarification note, RPC suggested that these matters can be addressed in an Errata schedule.

- 7.34 Plainly this matter needs to be addressed. I recommend that the information is corrected in the HNA document itself. If this is not practical the corrections should be pursued by way of an Errata schedule

Correct the information in the Housing Needs Assessment document itself. If this is not practical the corrections should be pursued by way of an Errata schedule.

Policy 2: Housing Mix

- 7.35 The policy comments about housing mix. It is based on extensive information on house sizes and local housing need and is underpinned by the HNA.
- 7.36 The policy comments that housing proposals will need to reflect local housing need using the best available and proportionate evidence. It also comments that new residential developments, except for self-build plots and conversions, will offer a housing mix whereby at least 80% of homes are three-bedrooms or fewer, unless evidence is provided showing there is no longer such a local need.
- 7.37 In general terms the policy takes an appropriate approach to this important matter. Nevertheless, I recommend that it is recast so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF and can be applied consistently by BDC and BA. I also recommend that the second part of the policy acknowledges that the specific requirement for smaller homes may not always be commercially-viable. This matter overlaps with RPC's responses to the clarification note.
- 7.38 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

'Development proposals for residential use should reflect local housing need using the best available and proportionate evidence, including the Reedham Housing Need Assessment (2020).

Other than for self-build plots and conversions, new residential developments should consist of at least 80% of homes that are three-bedrooms or fewer, unless evidence is provided either showing there is no longer such a local need or that a different mix of house sizes is required to ensure that the development is commercially-viable.'

Policy 3: Affordable Housing

- 7.39 This is the second policy based on extensive information on house sizes and local housing need and the HNA. It advises that affordable housing delivered will comprise 60% affordable rented housing and 40% home ownership.
- 7.40 I am satisfied that the first part of the policy takes an appropriate approach. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification to the wording used so that it is more appropriate to a neighbourhood plan. The second part of the policy provides detailed guidance on First Homes and local eligibility. Such an approach is consistent with Planning Practice guidance (ID: 70-008-20210524).

- 7.41 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace ‘will’ with ‘should’

Policy 4: Design

- 7.42 Paragraphs 68 and 69 of the Plan set the scene for the policy. They advise that it is important that any future development respects existing design, with a view to retaining the local rural character and ensuring this is not diluted through new development. The supporting text advises that whilst there is already a considerable amount of general detail in existing policy on design principles which can be used in Reedham, the Plan wishes to go further beyond this and have a policy based on more specific design codes for the parish. On this basis the Reedham Design Guidance and Codes Document has been prepared as part of the Plan. This provides a baseline assessment of local character, views, and natural infrastructure.
- 7.43 The supporting text also advises design codes can be a valuable tool for securing context-driven, high-quality development and that they will provide more certainty to both developers and the community in securing developments that are designed to the aspirations of the community.
- 7.44 The policy comments that all new built development, including extensions, are expected to be consistent with the Reedham Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance and Codes in general, and specifically where detail is given in codes DC.01 to DC.12. The policy also sets out a series of locally-distinctive design criteria.
- 7.45 In the round a very good local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. Nevertheless, I recommend that the policy is modified so that it can be applied in a proportionate way by BDC and the BA based on the nature and the location of proposed developments.
- 7.46 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace ‘All new built development, including extensions, are expected to be consistent with’ with: ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, new built development should respond positively to’

Policy 5: Design of the Mill Road Site (GNLP 3003)

- 7.47 Paragraph 71 of the Plan advises that the policy has been prepared to help address the concerns raised and ensure any prospective development at the Mill Road site (as proposed in the GNLP) meets community needs and aspirations. The policy also sets out specific design criteria for the site.
- 7.48 BDC suggests that the policy should be deleted. It advises that the site is no longer to be included in the GNLP following the receipt of the Planning Inspector’s report on the emerging Local Plan in August 2023. In its response to the clarification note RPC commented that:

'It would prefer to keep the policy (modified accordingly, such as references to GNLP 3003 removed) in case an application comes forward anyway given the landowners clear intentions.'

- 7.49 I have considered this matter very carefully. Whilst I appreciate RPC's intentions, there is no need for a policy of this nature in the neighbourhood plan when BDC has made a definitive statement about its removal from the emerging local plan. As such I recommend that the policy and the supporting text are deleted. Plainly if the site is considered again in a future local plan the wider matter could be addressed in any full or partial review of a made neighbourhood plan.

Delete the policy

Delete paragraph 71

Policy 6: Residential Parking Standards

- 7.50 The policy comments about residential parking standards. It advises that proposals should consider all relevant points made under Design Code and DC.09 Parking Typologies and Section 10- Car parking of the Reedham Design Guidance and Codes and the Design Checklist in Appendix C.
- 7.51 BDC suggests that the policy be expanded to state that sustainable drainage could be incorporated, with a cross referencing to Policy 11 of the Plan. RPC agreed to this suggestion in its response to the clarification note. I recommend modifications to the policy and to the supporting text accordingly.
- 7.52 The policy provides specific guidance for off street, on street and courtyard/garage parking. BDC comments that the suggested minimum size for a garage is larger than that indicated for parking spaces in the County Council's Parking Guidelines and is insufficiently justified. In its response to the clarification note RPC commented that:
- 'It is known that garages are used for all sorts of things such as storage and bikes and this needs to be taken into account or the garage simply will not be used for parking the car, or could even deter cycle ownership and use if there is nowhere to store the bike securely.'*
- 7.53 I have considered this matter carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the specific element of the policy on garage sizes is deleted. There is no evidence supplied in the Plan that the provision of a garage of the size specified would actively encourage the owners/occupiers of the house concerned to use it for parking a vehicle. In addition, the provision of larger garages may reduce the ability of developers to achieve high quality design and/or make the best use of development sites.
- 7.54 As RPC advise the proposed minimum garage size is taken from Figure 68 (page 57) of the Design Codes. In the round I am satisfied that this element of the Design Code should remain unchanged. Other policies in the Plan comment about the need for development proposals to take account of the Design Code. Should a developer wish to incorporate garages of the size suggested within a well-designed proposal, BDC would be able to respond positively to the overall scheme.

- 7.55 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the initial section of the policy replace the second paragraph with: ‘Parking areas and driveways should incorporate sustainable drainage systems and use permeable surfaces to minimise surface water runoff.’

In the section on ‘Courtyard and Garage parking’ delete the second sentence (on the size of garages)

At the end of paragraph 72 add: ‘The contents of Policy 6 on sustainable drainage overlap with the contents of Policy 11 (Flood and Surface Water Management). Developers should address both policies in their preparation of development proposals.’

Policy 7: Biodiversity

- 7.56 This policy is based on comprehensive supporting text about the natural environment.
- 7.57 The policy has three main elements. The first comments that all development proposals that result in an increase in developed floor space will need to demonstrate at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity, using the most up to date metric. The second comments that where possible and feasible new developments are encouraged to include wildlife features and enhancements within the landscape such as the incorporation of hedgehog gaps beneath garden fences and the incorporation of bee bricks in every dwelling. The third comments about the retention of trees and hedgerows within development proposals.
- 7.58 In the round the policy takes a positive approach to these important matters and has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 7.59 I recommend that the various elements of the policy are recast so that they have the clarity required by the NPPF and can be implemented by BDC and BA. In some cases, elements of one part of the submitted policy are relocated into one of the other elements to ensure that each section is distinct and self-contained. I also recommend that the title of the policy is modified so that it more properly captures the issues addressed in the policy. As BA comment, not all the elements in the policy directly relate to biodiversity.
- 7.60 The timing of the Plan relates well to the roll-out of the Environment Act in general and for biodiversity net gain in particular. I recommend that the supporting text is updated to reflect these matters and to take account of the revisions to the NPPF in December 2023 after the Plan had been submitted.
- 7.61 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of the first part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals which will result in an increase in developed floor space should demonstrate at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity, using the most

up-to-date metric. As appropriate to the scale, nature and location of the development proposal concerned, the net gain in biodiversity may be achieved in the following ways: [at this point include a-h from the submitted policy]

Replace the remainder of the policy with:

‘Where practicable and feasible, development proposals should incorporate wildlife features and enhancements within their landscaping proposals.

Wherever practicable, development proposals should incorporate existing hedgerow and trees into their layouts. Proposals that would affect trees or hedgerow should be accompanied by a survey to establish the health and age of affected trees and/or hedgerow, and appropriate management plans. Where development proposals would result in the loss of trees or hedgerows, appropriate replacement provision of greater value than the trees or hedgerows lost should be provided. Any replacement species should be native British species and of local provenance.

Development proposals to improve green infrastructure links to the Wherryman's Way Long Distance Trail, the Broads and other permissive paths will be supported where they comply with other development policies. Wherever practicable, any such proposals should incorporate community access to these features.’

Replace the title of the policy with ‘The Natural Environment and Biodiversity’

In paragraph 83 delete ‘Para 174 supports the mapping of ecological assets and networks, including for enhancement or creation. NPPF paras 96 -101 covers protecting existing green open spaces and creation of new ones.’

Replace paragraph 84 with:

‘The Environment Act (2021) requires all development schemes to deliver a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Development proposals must ‘leave biodiversity in a better state than before’. BNG has been a requirement since February 2024. The requirement will only affect nationally important infrastructure sites from November 2025. There are three ways to deliver BNG. The first is onsite within the site curtilage. The second is off site locally with biodiversity enhanced in conjunction with nearby landowners, and the third is through statutory credits. The requirement for BNG is in addition to following the usual mitigation hierarchy to avoid, mitigate or compensate for biodiversity losses.’

Policy 8: Local Green Spaces

- 7.62 This policy proposes the designation of four Local Green Spaces (LGSSs). The justification for the approach taken towards the policy wording is underpinned by the details in Appendix B.

- 7.63 I looked at the proposed LGSs carefully during the visit. I saw that they were very different in their scale and character and varied from the Village Hall Playing Fields to the much smaller area around the War Memorial.
- 7.64 The proposed designation of the green private area associated with Quay Terrace has attracted representations from some of the property owners commenting that the land is in private ownership and that no rights of public access are conferred. I have considered those comments very carefully. In the round I am satisfied that the green area meets the test for LGS designation in paragraph 106 of the NPPF. It provides an attractive green space between Quay Terrace and the River. The issue of the ownership on the land is a neutral issue. Planning practice guidance advises that LGS designation does not provide any public access to the designated areas (ID:37-017-20140306) or alter whatever maintenance arrangements are in place (ID: 37-021-20140306).
- 7.65 Based on all the information available to me, including my own observations, I am satisfied that each of the four proposed LGSs comfortably comply with the three tests in paragraph 106 of the NPPF. The green area around the War Memorial (LGS2) and the Village Hall Playing Fields (LGS4) are precisely the types of green spaces which the authors of the NPPF would have had in mind in preparing national policy on this important matter.
- 7.66 In addition, I am satisfied that their proposed designation would accord with the more general elements of paragraph 105 of the NPPF. Firstly, I am satisfied that the designations are consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. They do not otherwise prevent sustainable development coming forward in the neighbourhood area and no such development has been promoted or suggested. Secondly, I am satisfied that the LGSs are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period. They are an established element of the local environment and have existed in their current format for many years. In addition, no evidence was brought forward during the examination that would suggest that the proposed LGSs would not endure beyond the end of the Plan period.

The policy wording

- 7.67 Neighbourhood plan policies on the designation of LGSs are underpinned by the approach taken in paragraphs 105 to 107 of the NPPF. In effect individually plans select their own LGSs and then apply the national policy to the identified sites. However, the Plan has decided to provide a more detailed policy to protect the identified LGSs than is traditionally the case. The scope of the policy and its approach is detailed in Appendix B of the Plan.
- 7.68 I have considered this matter carefully and looked at the details in Appendix B of the Plan. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the bulk of the policy sets out a balanced and well-considered expression of policy in relation to LGSs. There is a clear relationship between the policy and the specific LGSs proposed in the Plan. The Plan contains a range of LGSs across the village. In these circumstances a matter-of-fact approach to future development on LGSs may prevent sensitive development from

coming forward on individual sites which would not conflict with the purposes of the designation.

- 7.69 The final part of the policy comments that proposals that are on land adjacent to Local Green Space are required to set out how any impacts on the special qualities of the green space, as identified by its reason for designation, will be mitigated. I have considered this matter carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that this element of the policy is deleted. I have reached this conclusion for three reasons. The first is that the approach taken has no direct relationship with national policy or guidance on LGSs. Planning Practice Guidance (ID: 37-007-20140306) comments that designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. It comments that plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making. Whilst I am satisfied that this is not RPC's intention, the policy has the potential to hinder otherwise acceptable development coming forward on adjacent sites. The second is that it will place onerous and disproportionate responsibilities on adjacent landowners. The third is that it may affect a significant number of planning applications in the village of Reedham.
- 7.70 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Delete the final part of the policy (beginning with 'Proposals that are...')

Policy 9: Protection of Important Local Views

- 7.71 The context to the policy is the location of Reedham along the northern bank of the River Yare and benefits from views across the marshes and beyond. The supporting text comments that the open countryside around the village is valued by the community and visitors who appreciate its tranquillity, wildlife, and spectacular views. It also advises that the parish falls into three different character areas – Halvergate Marshes, Marshes Fringe and Plateau Farmland.
- 7.72 The Plan seeks to protect ten public views, many of which include local features of the landscape, key buildings, and landmarks. A justification for each of the views is provided in Reedham Neighbourhood Plan Views Assessment. There are pictures of each view in the Plan. The policy comments that development proposals that would significantly adversely affect these key views will not be supported. It also advises that proposals are expected to demonstrate that they are sited, and designed to be of a form and scale, that avoids or mitigates any significant harm to the key views.
- 7.73 In the round the Plan takes a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to this important matter. However, to bring the clarity required by the NPPF, I recommend that the final element of the policy is modified so that it sets out more clearly how development should respond to the identified views. This will enable BDC and BA to be able to implement the policy through the development management process in a consistent fashion. The modification reverses the order of the sentences so that the policy has a positive focus.

- 7.74 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the final part of the policy with:

‘The location, design, scale, and massing of development proposals (including any associated mitigation measures) should be carefully considered to avoid any unacceptable harm to the identified key views.

Development proposals that would have an unacceptable impact on the identified key views will not be supported.’

Policy 10: Dark Skies

- 7.75 The context to the policy is that the CPRE Dark Skies Mapping shows that much of the parish, apart from the built-up village centre, falls into the darkest categories.
- 7.76 The policy comments that development proposals are required to address light spillage and eliminate all unnecessary forms of artificial outdoor lighting. It also comments that development proposals that involve external lighting, outside the Dark Sky Zones category 1 in the Broads Local Plan, will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they are required for safety, security, or community reasons and where the design minimises light spillage. Building design that results in increased light spill from internal lighting needs to be avoided unless suitable mitigation measures are implemented.
- 7.77 The policy takes a very positive approach to this matter. It is underpinned by local research and associated policy information on dark skies, including that in the adopted Broads Local Plan. On this basis it is locally-distinctive. Within this wider context, I recommend detailed modifications to the different elements of the policy have the clarity required by the NPPF and use language which is appropriate to a neighbourhood plan.
- 7.78 The fourth paragraph of the policy explains how the policy will be applied. As such, I recommend that it is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text.
- 7.79 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘are required to’ with ‘should’

In the second part of the policy replace ‘permitted’ with ‘supported’

Replace the third part of the policy with: ‘New buildings and extensions should be designed in a way which will ensure light spill from internal lighting is minimised.’

Delete the fourth part of the policy.

In the final part of the policy replace ‘Proposals including’ with ‘Development proposals which include’

Replace the second sentence of the final part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should avoid disturbance to wildlife in the immediate locality. Proposals include lighting which would otherwise cause disturbance or risk to wildlife or the dark skies landscape should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures.’

At the end of paragraph 104 add the deleted fourth part of the policy.

Policy 11: Flood and Surface Water Management

- 7.80 The context to the policy is that the built-up area of Reedham is constrained to the south, east and west by flood risk, with land falling into Flood Zone 3. A small area to the south falls within Flood Zone 2. The depths of flood water in high-risk areas suggest that this is predominantly below 300mm but in some isolated areas it can be up to 900mm such as on some plots in Mill Road, Cliff Close and Church View Close. Large areas of the parish also lie within either the Waveney Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board (IDB) or the Broads IDB.
- 7.81 The policy is wide-ranging. It comments that proposals should have regard to the surface water drainage hierarchy with infiltration on site as the preferred disposal option, followed by discharge to a suitable watercourse and then connection to a sewer. Where feasible and practicable, the policy advises that proposals should incorporate sustainable drainage systems that are appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and are designed to be an integral part of the green infrastructure.
- 7.82 In the round the policy takes a very positive approach to the natural environment of the parish. It has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.
- 7.83 In this broader context I recommend that the final two parts of the policy are combined and modified. As submitted, they disregard the practicability of their ambitions and include unnecessary explanatory text.
- 7.84 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the final two paragraphs of the policy with: ‘Wherever practicable, development proposals should incorporate multifunctional green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems and maximise multifunctional benefits, including planting.’

Policy 12: Protection of Community Facilities

- 7.85 The policy identifies six community facilities and services to be protected by Policy SP16 and DM44 of the Broads Local Plan and Policy E2 and CSU2 of the Broadland Local Plan.
- 7.86 I am satisfied that the facilities identified are appropriate to be identified in a policy of this nature. The policy takes a practical approach in applying an existing Local Plan policy to the identified facilities. I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions.

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

Policy 13: Provision of New Community Facilities

- 7.87 This policy comments about the provision of new community facilities. It has two parts. The first comments that development proposals which support the provision of new or the enhancement of existing community services and facilities in Reedham will be supported in principle subject to other relevant policies of the development plan. It advises that this includes the provision of local businesses which could provide appropriate hospitality, retail, or home working opportunities in the area. The second comments that significant weight should be given to the appropriate development of additional recreational provision which will provide new social opportunities such as social interaction to residents and visitors. It then sets out a policy approach to support the development of new recreational open space.
- 7.88 BDC comment that the title of the policy should be broadened so that it addresses some of the related commercial uses referenced in the policy. I have considered this matter carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the commentary on the related commercial uses is repositioned into the supporting text. This will allow the policy to have a clear role and purpose.
- 7.89 I also recommend that the second part of the policy is recast. This results in the deletion of its first sentence which is explanatory text rather than a land use policy.
- 7.90 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

‘Development proposals for the provision of new community facilities or for the enhancement of existing community services and facilities will be supported where they comply with other relevant policies in the development plan.

Proposals for the delivery of new recreational open spaces will be supported where they are: [insert paragraphs a and b from the submitted policy]

At the end of paragraph 122 add: ‘Policy 12 identifies community facilities which will be safeguarded by existing policies in the development plan. Policy 13 offers support for new community facilities or the enhancement of existing such facilities. The Parish Council recognises that the benefits of such development may be provided by local businesses through appropriate hospitality, retail, or home working opportunities in the area. Any such proposals could be determined on their merits.’

Policy 14: Conversion of Rural Farm Buildings

- 7.91 The policy comments that the enlargement of redundant farm buildings for certain types of commercial use or community use will be viewed favourably, subject to other relevant development plan policies, except where this would be deemed a main town centre use as defined by the NPPF. It also advises that extensions should enhance the character and appearance of their immediate surroundings and that where an

extension is acceptable it should be subordinate in scale to the existing building and respectful in its design detailing to the parent building.

- 7.92 BDC makes a series of comments on the format and the wording of the policy as follows:

‘The Council’s comments at the Regulation 14 stage queried whether the policy conflicted with paragraph 87 of the NPPF. Whilst the policy text has been reworded to prevent town centre uses being allowed in converted rural buildings, the Council still feels that clarification is required as to whether this policy purely applies to commercial/community uses. It is not clear what the Neighbourhood Plan’s intentions are as regards a potential residential extension of a redundant rural farm building, either within the policy wording or within supporting text. The Council feels this should be clarified in order to meet paragraph 16(d) of the NPPF.’

- 7.93 In its response to the clarification note RPC commented that:

‘Redundant rural building refers to those covered by Class Q (permitted development) rights on the conversion of agricultural buildings, where extensions/ enlargement is not allowed under this (permitted development) right. The policy aims to support extensions or enlargement where the proposal is for commercial or community use, so not residential.

The term “certain types of commercial use” is accepted by the Group as vague. It could be replaced by a reference to Use Class E as the policy aimed to exclude large industrial type uses such as Use Class B. So, it could include sports, professional uses such as financial, nursery/ creche, medical, research, retail etc. It is recognised that there are (permitted development) rights that could result in these uses being changed in the future to residential (C3). However, the vacant farm buildings could be converted to residential anyway under Class Q (permitted development) rights and so this risk seems manageable.’

- 7.94 I have considered these comments very carefully within the wider ambitions of the policy. In this overall context I recommend a package of modifications which seek to reflect the scale and nature of the parish, the wider ambitions of the Plan and the context of Section 6 of the NPPF. On this basis, the recommended modifications incorporate the following elements:

- the use of wording to bring the clarity required by the NPPF;
- the introduction of an additional element into the policy to comment about the principle of the commercial and community uses anticipated for redundant agricultural buildings;
- the definition of the types of commercial and community uses anticipated by the policy;
- a restructuring of the criteria which would be applied to extensions; and
- the introduction of an additional criteria on parking and access to avoid any detrimental impacts on the local highways network; and the inclusion of additional supporting text to explain the types of development which the policy addresses.

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

Replace the policy with:

‘Insofar as planning permission is required, the use of redundant farm buildings for commercial use or community use which relate to the scale, location and character of the parish will be supported. Commercial uses which would be a main town centre use as defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework will not be supported.

Proposals for the extension of redundant farm buildings for the type of uses identified in the first part of the policy will be supported where they would:

- **be subordinate in scale to the existing building;**
- **respect the design and details of the parent building;**
- **maintain and where practicable, enhance the character and appearance of their immediate surroundings;**
- **incorporate a safe access to the local highway network and sufficient off-road vehicle parking and manoeuvring space for the size of premises.’**

Replace paragraph 123 with:

‘In general terms extensions to a rural building as part of its conversion are unacceptable and proposals to convert buildings should be contained within the confines of the existing building shell. However, to support rural enterprise and encourage jobs locally, Policy 14 supports the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to commercial and community uses which relate to the scale, location, and character of the parish. The policy also clarifies that uses which would be a main town centre use as defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework will not be supported. This element of the policy has been included to ensure that the policy does not have unintended consequences.

The policy also supports the expansion of these buildings to accommodate the identified uses subject to a series of amenity, design and traffic and parking criteria. The policy does not address the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to residential use. Any such proposals may benefit from Class Q permitted development rights. Any proposed extension for residential uses would be considered on their merits taking account of relevant development plan policies.’

Policy 15: Parking Provision within Reedham and for Reedham Primary and Nursery School

- 7.96 This is a wide-ranging policy on parking provision. Whilst I visited the parish at a quiet time of year and within the school day, the Plan provides evidence of the parking issues faced around the School. Plainly these issues will be heightened in the Summer when visitors will add to normal traffic levels.
- 7.97 Whilst the policy has two distinct headings, they both make reference to the School. I recommend modifications so that the first part applies more generally throughout the

parish. I also recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in both parts of the policy so that they have the clarity required by the NPPF and can be applied consistently by BDC and the BA. I also recommend a consequential modification to the title of the policy.

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

Replace the policy with:

‘General Parking Provision

Development proposals to improve the provision of car parking in the village will be supported where:

- they are consistent with the Reedham Design Guidance and Code (2022);
- they will not cause any unacceptable detriment to the amenities of the area; and
- they can be safely accommodated within the local highways network.

Parking at the School

Development proposals for the improvement or expansion of parking provision for Reedham Primary and Nursery School will be supported.

Development proposals for Reedham Primary and Nursery School should incorporate a parking management plan and school travel plan.’

Replace the policy title with: ‘New Parking Provision, including for Reedham Primary and Nursery School

Policy 16: Non-designated heritage assets

- 7.99 This policy comments on heritage assets. Its primary focus is on the identification of a series of non-designated heritage assets. I am satisfied that the proposed non-designated heritage assets are appropriate to be identified in the Plan. They are described in the relevant Assessment.
- 7.100 The policy comments more generally about heritage assets. However, in doing so it brings no added value beyond the approach taken in national and local planning policies. As such I recommend that the policy is modified so that it focuses solely on the proposed non-designated heritage assets. I also recommend that the final part of the policy is modified so that it has regard to paragraph 209 of the NPPF.
- 7.101 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

‘The Plan identifies the following buildings as non-designated heritage assets (and as shown on Figure 24 and on Appendix A of the Policies Map):

[List the properties]

The effect of a development proposal on the significance of an identified non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining planning applications. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

Community Actions

- 7.102 The Plan includes a series of community actions. They are non-land use issues which have naturally come forward as the Plan was being prepared.
- 7.103 National policy advises that community actions should be included in a separate part of the Plan to distinguish them from the land use policies. In this case they are included in the main part of the Plan with the land use policies. I have considered this matter carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the approach taken is appropriate. I have reached this conclusion for the following reasons. The first is that the Actions are distinguished from the land use policies using a different colour. The second is that the Actions overlap with the land use policies. The third is that the approach taken adds to the overall legibility of the Plan. Within this context I recommend that the supporting text is modified to explain more fully the role of Community Actions and how they are presented in the Plan.

Replace the final two sentences of paragraph 29 with:

'The Plan includes a series of Community Actions. Whilst they are not land use in their nature, the Parish Council felt that they were important enough to include in the Plan. They are matters which will be led and implemented by the local community and Parish Council. The Community Actions are shown in a different colour from the land use policies. Whilst the Actions are locally-important they will not form part of the development plan.'

- 7.104 I am satisfied that the proposed Actions are distinctive to the parish. The following are specifically noteworthy:
- CA1: Local action to encourage wildlife;
 - CA3: Community Services and Infrastructure; and
 - CA4: Improving School Parking facilities.

Monitoring and Review

- 7.105 The Plan addresses the monitoring and review process for the Plan in a positive way. This is best practice.
- 7.106 Given the importance of the adoption of the emerging GNLP on the planning policy context in the parish I recommend that paragraph 148 of the Plan is expanded so that it provides guidance to residents and the development industry alike about the way in which the Plan may wish to respond to the adoption of that Plan. In this case the

respective timing of the two plans has allowed RPC to ensure that the submitted Plan is aligned as closely as possible to the GNLP.

- 7.107 The language used in the recommended modifications acknowledges that in the same way that there is no requirement for a qualifying body to produce a neighbourhood plan, there is no requirement for those organisations to review a 'made' neighbourhood plan. Nevertheless, the recommended wording has been designed to recognise that where there is a conflict between different elements of the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan. Plainly a review of a 'made' Plan will have the ability to keep its contents up-to-date and to be aligned to the wider development plan throughout the Plan period.

At the end of paragraph 148 add:

'The adoption of the Greater Norwich Plan will bring the planning policy context up to date. In this context the Parish Council will assess the need or otherwise for a full or partial review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of that Plan.'

Other Matters - General

- 7.108 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly because of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan because of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters. It will be appropriate for BDC/the BA and RPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

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

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2038. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area and to designate a series of Local Green Spaces.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Reedham Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood development plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to Broadland District Council and the Broads Authority that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report the Reedham Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved in April 2019.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner. The responses to the clarification note were detailed, informative and delivered in a very timely fashion.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
27 March 2024