

East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2031

**A report to Vale of White Horse District Council on
the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Vale of White Horse District Council in December 2022 to carry out the independent examination of the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 17 January 2023.
- 3 The Plan includes a range of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on safeguarding its local character and maintaining its separation from both Wantage and Grove. The Plan is very-well written and presented. It is also distinctive to the neighbourhood area.
- 4 The Plan has been significantly underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been actively engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
7 March 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) by East Challow Parish Council (ECPC) 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. Its most recent update was published in 2021.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether or not 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 a result of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope. Any plan 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 development plan in particular. It has a specific focus on safeguarding its local character and maintaining its separation from both Wantage and Grove. It also proposes a package of local green spaces.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the plan area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by VWHDC, with the consent of ECPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both VWHDC and ECPC. 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. I have 40 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 examining neighbourhood plans. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service.

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 Sections 7 and 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. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan complies with the three requirements.

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 Screening Statement.
- the various appendices.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- ECPC's responses to the clarification note.
- the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (2016).
- the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (2019).
- the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
- Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates).
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 17 January 2023. I looked at the overall character and appearance of the neighbourhood area in general and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. The visit is covered in more detail in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 of this report.

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 was satisfied that the Plan could be examined without the need for a public hearing.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ECPC has prepared a Consultation Statement. The Statement is very thorough and proportionate to the Plan. It includes a detailed assessment of the consultation undertaken as part of the various stages of the production of the Plan. The aims of the consultation exercises and a summary of the processes followed are set out in Sections 2 and 3 respectively. The Statement also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (November to December 2021) and how the community was encouraged to participate in that exercise.
- 4.3 The Statement sets out details of the range of consultation events that were carried on the initial stages of the plan-making process. It provides details about:
- the open meeting (March 2017);
 - the use of a community questionnaire (June 2017);
 - contact with local businesses;
 - ongoing local feedback through the village newsletter;
 - contact with landowners on potential designation of local green spaces (September 2021); and
 - on-going use of a website.
- 4.4 The Statement also comments in significant detail on how its key policies were influenced by a variety of private and public bodies.
- 4.5 Section 5 and Appendix 34 of the Statement set out how the submitted Plan took account of consultation feedback on the pre-submission Plan. It includes details about the comments received and ECPC's responses. They do so in a very thorough and effective way. They help to describe the evolution of the Plan. Other appendices provide details of the various events.
- 4.6 Consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation.
- 4.7 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. VWHDC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Representations Received

4.8 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by the District Council. It ended on 22 December 2022. This exercise generated comments from a range of organisations as follows:

- Letcombe Brook Project
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Historic England
- The Coal Authority
- National Highways
- Network Rail
- Wilts and Berks Canal Trust
- Blenheim Strategic Partners
- S&SE Networks
- Natural England
- National Grid
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Thames Water

4.9 The Plan also received representations from a local resident. I have taken all the representations into account in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so I make specific reference to certain representations in this report.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of East Challow. Its population in 2011 was 769 persons living in 321 dwellings. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 11 November 2016.
- 5.2 The neighbourhood area has an irregular shape. It lies approximately a mile to the west of Wantage. Its southern part is within the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 5.3 East Challow is an attractive village which includes an extensive conservation area. As the Plan describes the older village is based around the Church and what is now the village green. The A417 road bisects the village approximately along a north-south axis. More modern housing has been developed off Hedge Hill Road and more recently off Goodlake Avenue (the Crest Nicholson development).

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Part 1): Strategic Sites and Policies was adopted in December 2016. It sets out the basis for future development in the District up to 2031. All the policies in this part of the Local Plan are strategic policies of the development plan. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Part 2): Detailed Policies and Additional Sites was adopted in October 2019. It is this broader development plan context against which I am required to examine the submitted Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.5 The following policies in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 are particularly relevant to the submitted Plan:

Core Policy 3	Settlement Hierarchy
Core Policy 4	Meeting our Housing Needs
Core Policy 7	Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services
Core Policy 37	Design and Local Distinctiveness
Core Policy 39	The Historic Environment
Core Policy 40	Sustainable Design and Construction
Cote Policy 44	Landscape
Core Policy 45	Green Infrastructure

In addition, the following policies in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 are particularly relevant to the submitted Plan:

Development Policy 23	Impact of Development on Amenity
Development Policy 29	Settlement Character and Gaps
Development Policy 37	Conservation Areas

- 5.6 East Challow is identified as a Larger Village within the Western Vale Sub-Area in Local Plan Part 1 (Core Policy 3). Larger Villages are the third of four sets of settlements in the local hierarchy and are defined as settlements with a more limited range of employment, services, and facilities. Core Policy 3 comments that unallocated development will be limited to providing for local needs and to support employment, services, and facilities within local communities.
- 5.7 The Basic Conditions Statement usefully highlights the key policies in the development plan and how they relate to policies in the submitted Plan. It provides confidence to all concerned that the submitted Plan sits within its local planning policy context.
- 5.8 The submitted Plan has been prepared within its wider development plan context. In doing so it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.

Unaccompanied Visit

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 17 January 2023. I approached the neighbourhood area from Wantage to the east. This allowed me to understand its connection with the strategic highway network and the way in which it sat within the wider landscape.
- 5.10 I looked initially at the existing separation between Wantage and East Challow. I saw that the area to the south of the A417 was more open than that to the north of the road. I also saw the significance of the King Alfred's Academy – West site (in Wantage) in the area between the two settlements.
- 5.11 I then looked at the proposed local green spaces around the A417. The historic significance of the Village Green (LGS1) in the centre of the village was self-evident.
- 5.12 I then walked along Canal Farm Lane to the footpath along the former towpath. At this point the route and alignment of the former canal was very clear. I crossed the A417 and walked along the footpath. After a short while I saw the route of the former canal to the west of the village.
- 5.13 I then looked at the houses off Claypit Lane. The new houses had aged well and the associated landscaping was now semi-mature. I saw the sensitive conversion of the former Nalder and Nalder building.
- 5.14 I then walked up to the recreation area off Hedge Hill Road (LGs10/11). I found the pedestrian access off Reynolds Way. I saw its various uses (including the allotments). I was rewarded for my efforts with extensive views to the north and north-east.
- 5.15 I then walked up hill to the Challow Cricket Club (LGs12) and the adjacent British Legion building. I was rewarded with equally good views (in this case to the south and west across the North Wessex AONB)

- 5.16 I left the neighbourhood area along the A417 to Faringdon. This highlighted the way in which the village related to the countryside to its north and west.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole

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 considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented and informative document. It is also proportionate to the Plan itself.

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) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations; and
- not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (7).

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

National Planning Policies and Guidance

6.4 The key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in July 2021.

6.5 The NPPF sets out a range of core land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan:

- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and Parts 1 and 2 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031;
- 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;
- always seeking to secure 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

6.6 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is identified as a golden thread running through the planning system. 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.

- 6.7 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and recent ministerial statements.
- 6.8 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 in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the parish within the context of its position in the District's settlement hierarchy. It includes a series of policies that seek to ensure the character, appearance and landscape setting of the neighbourhood area is safeguarded. The Basic Conditions Statement maps the policies in the Plan against the appropriate sections of the NPPF.
- 6.9 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 16). This is reinforced in Planning Practice Guidance. Section 41-041-20140306 of the Guidance 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.
- 6.10 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

- 6.11 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. It is clear to me that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension the Plan includes policies on economic development (Policies E1 and E2). In the social role, it includes policies on community facilities (Policies C1 and C2) and on sustainable travel (Policies FP1 and FP2). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has specific policies on the setting of the village in the wider landscape (Policies L1 and L2), and on green corridors/biodiversity (Policies EV1 and EV2). ECPC's assessment of this matter is set out in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development

- 6.12 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the wider Vale of White Horse District area in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.13 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted Local Plan. The Basic Conditions Statement helpfully relates the Plan's policies to policies in the Local Plan 2031 Parts 1 and 2. Subject to the incorporation of 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

- 6.14 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.15 In order to comply with this requirement VWHDC undertook a screening exercise (August 2021) on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. As a result of this process, it concluded that the Plan is not likely to have any significant effects on the environment and accordingly would not require SEA.

Habitat Regulations

- 6.16 The screening report also included a separate Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan. It concludes that the Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects on a European nature conservation site or undermine their conservation objectives alone or in combination taking account of the precautionary principle. As such Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 The HRA report is both thorough and comprehensive. It takes appropriate account of the following protected sites:
- Hackpen Hill SAC;
 - River Lambourn SAC;
 - Cothill Fen SAC;
 - Little Wittenham SAC; and
 - Oxford Meadows SAC.

It provides assurance to all concerned that the submitted Plan takes appropriate account of important ecological and biodiversity matters.

- 6.18 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. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.
- 6.19 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. In addition, 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. Based on all the evidence available to me, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Summary

- 6.20 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 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves 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 ECPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (Section 41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted plan. For clarity this section of the report comments on all policies regardless of whether or not I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.6 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 sections of the Plan (Sections 1-6)

- 7.7 The Plan is presented in a very effective and professional way. It is well-organised and includes very effective maps and carefully-chosen photographs that give real depth and purpose to its format. The Plan makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. A key element of the Plan is the way in which it is underpinned by comprehensive evidence contained in the various appendices. The Landscape Character Assessment, the Parish Character Appraisal and the Local Green Space Assessment are particularly impressive.
- 7.8 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies. Section 2 helpfully sets out twelve principles which have underpinned the development of the policies in the Plan.
- 7.9 The Introduction (Section 3) provides a very clear scene-setter for the wider Plan. It provides a context to the development of the Plan, its relationship with the Vale of White Horse Local Plan and the definition of the neighbourhood area itself. It advises about procedural matters such as the screening exercise and the examination and referendum stages of plan preparation. Figure 3 defines the neighbourhood area. The date of the designation of the neighbourhood area and the Plan period are addressed in paragraphs 3.7.1 and 3.7.3 respectively. In the round it is a particularly good introduction to a neighbourhood plan.

- 7.10 Chapter 4 comments about the neighbourhood area. It includes comprehensive information about the village, its location, its history, and the challenges for the future.
- 7.11 Chapter 5 sets out a series of key issues. This approach continues into Section 6 which defines the Vision and the objectives for the Plan. This approach helpfully underpins the way in which the policies are presented. Each policy comments about its evidence base, the way in which it relates to national and local policies and its relationship with the identifies principles and objectives of the Plan. This is best practice.
- 7.12 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 and 7.6 of this report.

General comments on policy titles

- 7.13 In several cases the policies in the Plan have lengthy titles. In a general sense this is not a basic conditions issue. However, in some cases, the policy titles overlap with the ambition of the policy. In other cases, the policy title refers to land outside the neighbourhood area. I recommend that the policy titles used in this report are incorporated in the Plan as recommended modifications. This approach will ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions by avoiding any potential conflicts between the policy titles, the policies themselves and the outcomes of planning applications which relate to those policies. The fundamental approach taken in the Plan is not affected by this recommended modification.

Use the policy titles set out in this report throughout the Plan

Policy L1 Maintaining the Separate Identity of East Challow

- 7.14 This is an important policy in the Plan. It comments that new development should respect the rural landscape setting of the neighbourhood area and the distinctive physical separation between the settlements of East Challow, and Wantage/Grove which contributes to the separate identity of these settlements. The second part of the policy identifies the type of development which would be acceptable in the parish.
- 7.15 I looked at the physical separation between East Challow and Wantage and between East Challow and Grove during the visit. The purpose of the policy was self-evident.
- 7.16 I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that its purpose, intent, and development management implications are clear. I also recommend that the second criterion in the second part of the policy is modified to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to ensure that the policy is future-proofed in the event that the development plan changes within the Plan period.
- 7.17 I also recommend that the supporting text clarifies that the policy will apply only within the neighbourhood area.

Replace the first part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals between East Challow and Wantage and East Challow and Grove should conserve the open and tranquil character of the intervening landscape. Proposals which would unacceptably detract from the separation

between East Challow and Wantage or between East Challow and Grove either individually or cumulatively will not be supported.

In the second part of the policy replace the second bullet point with: 'It is allocated for development in the development plan.'

At the end of paragraph 7.2.3 add: 'Policy L1 addresses this matter. For clarity the policy applies only within the East Challow Neighbourhood Area (as shown in Figure 3)'

Policy L2 The Setting of the Village in a Rural Landscape

- 7.18 This policy continues the approach taken in Policy L1. It comments that development proposals should preserve or where appropriate enhance the landscape character of the parish, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Landscape Character Assessment and Parish Character Appraisal. It continues by commenting that any proposals within the North Wessex Downs AONB must demonstrate how they conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty. The third part of the policy comments that major development in the AONB will not be supported except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.
- 7.19 The policy takes an appropriate approach to this matter. It provides a very well-considered local interpretation of Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 7.20 I recommend two modifications to the policy. The first will ensure that the second part of the policy uses the plural for development proposals throughout. The second introduces a proportionate approach to the details in the third part of the policy. Whilst this part of the policy successfully identifies the special characteristics of the AONB the recommended modification acknowledges that not every development proposal will impact on all of the characteristics.

Replace the first sentence of the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals within the North Wessex Downs AONB must demonstrate how they would conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty.'

At the beginning of the third part of the policy add: 'As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development'

Policy L3 Important Views and Vistas

- 7.21 This policy identifies ten important views in the parish. They are drawn from the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment and the Parish Character Assessment.
- 7.22 The policy comments that development proposals should preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape and, through their design, height, and massing, should recognise and respond positively to the various important views, safeguarding and, where practicable, enhancing them. It also comments that development proposals which would have a significant adverse impact on an identified important view will not be supported.

- 7.23 I looked at several of the views identified in the policy. Their importance was clear. They are distinctive to the parish and are evidence-based. Their identification has not been directly challenged through the consultation process.
- 7.24 I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that its focus is on the defined important views and vistas. As submitted the policy overlaps and repeats elements of Policy L2 which has addressed the setting of the village in its rural landscape. The modified policy will allow VWHDC to reach an informed judgement based on the nature of the development proposed and its impact on the identified view or views concerned. In recommending this modification I have taken account of the representations made by VWHDC and Blenheim Strategic Partners.
- 7.25 I also recommend that the order of the two parts of the policy is reversed. This will ensure that the views are identified initially followed by the policy implications. This revised order will bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions.

Reverse the order of the two parts of the policy.

Replace the initial part of the policy (as submitted) with:

‘The design, height, massing, and layout of development proposals should acknowledge and respond positively to the identified important views. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on an identified important view will not be supported.’

Policy L4 Local Green Spaces

- 7.26 This policy proposes the designation of a series of local green spaces (LGSs). They are described in greater detail in the Local Green Spaces Assessment (Appendix 9). They range from the village green (LG-1) to the more formal Cricket Ground (LG-12) to the two stretches of the former Canal (LG-2 and LG-3) The details in the Assessment include the extent to which the proposed LGSs meet the criteria for designation in the NPPF. In the round the Assessment has addressed this important matter in a very thorough and robust fashion.
- 7.27 Oxfordshire County Council has objected to the designation of two of the proposed LGSs (LG-7 and LG-8). I address these two proposed LGSs in paragraphs 7.30 to 7.33 of this report.

The other proposed LGSs

- 7.28 On the basis of all the information available to me, including my own observations, I am satisfied that the other proposed LGSs comfortably comply with the three tests in the NPPF. In several cases they are precisely the type of green space which the authors of the NPPF would have had in mind in preparing national policy. The canal-related LGSs are very distinctive to the parish.
- 7.29 In addition, I am satisfied that their proposed designation would accord with the more general elements of paragraph 101 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.

LG-7 and LG-8

- 7.30 These two proposed LGSs lie to the immediate south and west of the A417 in the vicinity of its junction with Letcombe Hill/Hedge Hill Road. In both cases they are open grassed areas adjacent to the highway. They are within the highway boundary and maintained by ECPC.
- 7.31 In both cases the Assessment comments that the proposed LGSs have an important amenity function within the village and its relationship with the A417. In the case of proposed LG-7 it comments that 'the site possesses significant beauty and amenity value - creating a green lung in the heart of the village. It has a different feel to that of the village green area, but performs a vital function in offsetting and softening the busy A417.' In the case of LGS 8 it comments that 'the site forms part of a green lung in the heart of the village. It has slowly been eroded over time and it is feared it will be lost through informal parking and lack of maintenance. It has a different feel to that of the main village green area, but performs a vital function in providing a linked green space and offsetting and softening the busy A417'.
- 7.32 I am satisfied that the two proposed LGSs are in reasonably close proximity to the village and are local in character.
- 7.33 ECPC contends that the two areas provide value to the local community as green areas. I looked carefully at the proposed LGSs during the visit. I saw that they contributed to a sense of openness at the junction of the A417 and Letcombe Hill and provided a buffer between these parts of the village from the main road. I saw that there were a series of trees on LG-7. On the balance of the evidence, including my own observations I am satisfied that LG-7 is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. In contrast I am not satisfied that LG-8 meets this important test. In my judgement it is a small area with very limited amenity or visual interest and it reads as a highway verge or splay. In these circumstances I recommend the deletion of LG-8 from the policy.
- 7.34 The policy itself takes the matter-of-fact approach as set out in paragraph 103 of the NPPF. As such it meets the basic conditions.

Delete LG-8

Policy HO1 Meeting the Housing Needs of the Parish

- 7.35 This policy seeks to ensure that any new housing development meets the housing needs of the parish and the local population. The Plan comments that the size and composition of the local population has changed considerably over the last 30 years.

A relatively small population who worked mainly locally has been replaced in part by a more mobile population, more than 90% of whom work outside the parish, some of whom commute to Oxford, Didcot, Swindon, London and further afield, requiring effective transport and different housing requirements. The Plan comments that with a changing population there is the risk that the character of the village will change and it is important to preserve the most important aspects of its character and the significance, historic and geo-biological, of its setting to avoid the risk of shifting baseline syndrome, involving gradual deterioration which is not perceived by new residents.

- 7.36 In this context the policy comments that in all new housing developments preference will be given to proposals which fulfil the requirements of the local community, delivering a well-balanced mix of housing types, including needs identified in the East Challow Housing Needs Survey 2020. The identified requirements include providing housing that is suitable for young people ('Starter Homes' or 'First Homes'), supported accommodation for those with disabilities, retirement homes, shared ownership, and homes to rent from social landlords.
- 7.37 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter. I recommend modifications to the policy based on the representation from VWHDC which broadens out the scope of housing need as addressed in the Housing Needs Survey 2020. It also avoids the submitted policy's commentary about a 'preference' for types of houses which does not have the clarity required by the NPPF.

Replace the policy with:

'Proposals for residential development should have regard to both the district-wide need and the local housing need as identified in the East Challow Housing Needs Survey.

Where appropriate, proposals should make provision to meet the needs of first-time buyers and young people (First Homes) and the needs of older people or those with disabilities including new homes that are suitable or capable of adaptation to facilitate lifetime independent living.'

Policy D1 Vernacular Architecture and Housing Density

- 7.38 This is a wide-ranging policy which seeks to ensure that new development responds positively to the vernacular architecture in the parish and the density of existing housing. It is underpinned by the Joint Design Guide, the Parish Character Appraisal including local character areas, and the Design Code. The Character Appraisal is a particularly good document.
- 7.39 In the round the policy is an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 7.40 I recommend that the opening element of the policy is modified so that it more clearly sets out the requirements of the policy and ensures that it can be applied in a proportionate way. This acknowledges that most proposals in the Plan period will be minor or domestic in nature and will not be affected by several of the design criteria.

- 7.41 I also recommend detailed modifications to the first and sixth criteria so that they have the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions.

Replace the opening element of the policy with: ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should:’

In 1 replace ‘VWHDC Design’ with ‘Joint’

Replace 6 with ‘Provide necessary infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of fibre Broadband to the edge of each development plot;’

Policy HE1 Heritage Assets

- 7.42 This policy sets out to safeguard heritage assets in the parish. In addition to assets which have statutory protection, the Plan comments that the parish also have several non-designated heritage assets which are of primarily historical significance and which are of value to the community. These are referenced in Appendices 2 and 11.
- 7.43 The policy comments that designated historic heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground including archaeological sites and listed buildings, will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place. It also comments that proposals for development that affect non-designated historic assets will be considered, taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021).
- 7.44 I recommend that the policy and the supporting text are modified so that the non-designated heritage assets are clearly identified rather than requiring interested parties to find the information in the appendix. In its response to the clarification note ECPC commented that Appendix 11 is not a finite list and suggests that any amendment to the policy to identify the non-designated heritage assets covered by the policy makes reference to those assets listed at Appendix 11 and others that may be identified during the Plan period. This would cover the eventuality where (as a result of a planning application/appeal) a property is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset but is not listed at Appendix 11. I fully understand that such circumstances might arise within the Plan period. Nevertheless they would need to be addressed by way of a partial review of the Plan.

In the second part of the policy replace ‘Proposals for development.....Plan area’ with ‘Development proposals that would affect a non-designated heritage asset (as identified in Appendix 11)’

At the end of paragraph 7.9.5 add: ‘In detail they are: [at this point list the titles of the fifteen assets in Appendix 11]’

Policy E1 General Development of Business

- 7.45 This is the first of two policies on business development. VWHDC has suggested that they are refined so that Policy E1 has a focus on the consolidation of existing commercial properties and the development of new businesses and Policy E2 has a specific focus on proposals which would involve the loss of existing commercial

floorspace. Such an approach would have merit. However, it is not directly necessary to ensure that the policies meet the basic conditions. I have however proposed the separation of the fifth element of Policy E2 (on proposals which would involve the loss of existing business premises) into a separate policy.

- 7.46 Policy E1 seeks to consolidate existing business in the parish. The bulk of existing business development is in two locations – the W&G business park and the Grove Business Park. It comments that proposals to develop existing businesses in the parish including those within the W&G Estate and Grove Business Park, will be supported where a series of criteria are met.
- 7.47 In general terms the policy sets out a positive approach to this matter. New business development will help to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the parish and provide employment opportunities for local people. I recommend two modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. The first would allow the policy to be applied on a proportionate basis. In this context it would be unreasonable for a modest development to have to provide a pedestrian access to the site from the village. The second ensures that the policy can be applied with consistency through the development management process. Whilst such applications may be ‘encouraged’, encouragement has little significance in the decision-making process.
- 7.48 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will assist in delivering the economic dimension of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of the policy with: As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location proposals to develop existing businesses including those within the W&G Estate and Grove Business Park, will be supported subject to the following conditions:

Policy E2 Development of New Businesses and Proposals for Non-Business Uses

- 7.49 This is a wide-ranging policy which address both new business proposals and proposals which would involve the loss of existing business uses.
- 7.50 The policy comments that proposals to develop new businesses will be supported provided the development is appropriate to the locality having regard to the requirements within the Plan and the supporting design code for the Plan. It also comments that businesses located within residential areas must be capable of adequately meeting their access needs to the extent necessary to mitigate their own impact. It also comments that new retail provision within East Challow village will be supported provided it complies with the other policies in the development plan.
- 7.51 The fifth part of the policy continues by commenting that other than where allowed under permitted development rights, the loss of existing businesses through change of use or redevelopment to non-employment/non-retail uses will be resisted unless clear evidence is provided.
- 7.52 The policy takes a robust and extensive approach to this important matter. I recommend that the second and third parts of the policy are combined and then modified to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. That clarity reflects the helpful

response to the clarification note from ECPC. I recommend that the fifth part of the policy is removed from the bulk of the policy and presented as a free-standing policy. In doing so I recommend detailed modifications to the wording used to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the wider package meets the basic conditions.

Replace the second and thirds parts of the policy with:

‘Businesses located within residential areas should be capable of adequately meeting their access needs to the extent necessary to mitigate their own impact. Where practicable, new business premises should be designed to enable their reversion to residential use in circumstances where the business ceases to trade.’

Separate the fifth part of the policy from the bulk of the policy and set it as a separate policy (Policy E3 Proposals for the Alternative Use or Redevelopment of Employment Premises).

In doing so replace ‘be resisted’ with ‘not be supported’

Policy C1 New or Enhanced Community Facilities

- 7.53 This policy celebrates the importance of community facilities in the parish. It is underpinned by the Community Facilities Assessment.
- 7.54 The policy comments that the provision of new community facilities such as a village shop or public house will be strongly supported. It also comments that proposals for the extension, adaptation, or redevelopment of the community facilities, identified in the Community Facilities Assessment (Appendix 6), for community purposes will be supported, provided the resulting improved facilities are appropriate in design terms and will not unacceptably impact the amenities of adjoining residential properties.
- 7.55 The policy takes an appropriate approach to this matter. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy C2 Preservation of Existing Community Facilities

- 7.56 This policy complements Policy C1. In this case its focus is on proposals that would result in the loss or harm of existing community facilities. As with Policy C1 it is underpinned by Appendix 6.
- 7.57 The policy comments that development proposals that will result in either the loss of or significant harm to a community facility as defined the Assessment will not be supported, unless it can clearly be demonstrated that the operation of the asset, or the ongoing delivery of the community value of the asset is no longer financially viable, it is surplus to requirements or it will be replaced by a facility of at least equivalent value, utility and ease of access to the local community.
- 7.58 The policy has been well-considered. It takes account of financial viability issues and the potential for the overall delivery/use of community facilities in the parish to alter within the Plan period. It meets the basic conditions. It will contribute significantly to the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

Policy CL1 Local Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

- 7.59 This policy comments that support will be given to renewable and low carbon energy generation proposals that are led by, or meet the needs of, the East Challow parish community and create opportunities for co-location of energy producers with energy users, in particular heat, and facilitate renewable and low carbon energy innovation.
- 7.60 The final part of the policy comments about the potential impact of such proposals on the local environment. Such an approach has regard to national policy. To bring a local dimension to this policy I recommend that the supporting text highlights the appendices which capture information on the environment in the parish. This will assist developers in their preparation of any such proposals.

At the end of paragraph 7.14.3 add: 'Policy CL1 comments on this matter. Its final section addresses the potential environmental implications. In assessing this matter reference should be made to appendices 1, 2, 10 and 12 of the Plan which detail the local landscape and environment of the parish.'

Policy CL2 Innovative Approaches to Construction

- 7.61 The policy seeks to support innovation in construction techniques. It comments that development proposals are encouraged to explore innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon homes which demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels. It also comments that proposals which seek to provide new homes with installed electric vehicle charging points will be encouraged. I recommend detailed modifications to the wording of the policy. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions.

Replace the policy with:

'Development proposals which take innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon homes which demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels will be supported.'

Proposals provide new homes with installed electric vehicle charging points will be supported.'

Policy FP1 Public and Community Transport Integration

- 7.62 The policy comments that new developments should integrate with the current green infrastructure network and have access to public and community transport and social and community facilities in the village via existing, new, or enhanced footpaths, cycleways, and other routes.
- 7.63 I am satisfied that the approach taken in the policy generally meets the basic conditions. I recommend a modification so that the policy can be applied in a way which reflects the practicability or otherwise of securing the connections anticipated. Plainly this will largely relate to the location of the site concerned.

At the beginning of the policy add: 'Where it is practicable to do so,'

Policy FP2 Existing Footways and Cycle Routes

- 7.64 This policy recognises the importance of footpaths in the parish and the opportunity to develop new cycle routes.
- 7.65 The policy comments that support will be given to proposals that improve and extend the existing footpath and cycle path network, allowing greater access to new housing, the village centre, green spaces, and the open countryside. It also comments that the loss of existing footpaths and cycle paths will be resisted. The second part of the policy comments that where the Wantage Western Relief Road crosses the route of existing rights of way, provision shall be made for suitable pedestrian/cycle crossing points.
- 7.66 The first part of the policy takes an appropriate approach. I recommend a detailed modification to the wording used to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.
- 7.67 I fully understand the intention of the second part of the policy (on the Wantage Western Relief Road). However, the relationship between footpaths and a new road is a highways issue rather than a land use matter. On this basis I recommend that it is deleted and repositioned into the Community Aspirations.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘be resisted’ with ‘not be supported’

Delete the second part of the policy.

Reposition the deleted second part of the policy into criterion (v) in Section 8 (Community Aspirations)

Policy FP3 Wilts and Berks Canal

- 7.68 This policy is the first of two on the Canal. It comments that the Wilts and Berks Canal is regarded locally as a recreation area and a wildlife habitat. It continues in commenting that all new development should ensure that its value to the community for these purposes is maintained and enhanced.
- 7.69 I sought ECPC’s comments on the purpose of the policy and the way in which it could be implemented through the development management process. It commented that:
- ‘The Parish Council does believe that Policy FP3 adds value as a separate policy to policy FP4 because it is about embracing the benefits of the Canal as a recreational/wildlife resource to the local community.*
- It is anticipated (that VWHDC) would implement policy FP3 by using it to lever S106 monies/prioritise CIL spending; or using it to require developers to carry out works to restore the sections of the Canal; or using it to support refusal reason(s) where development is likely to adversely impact on the recreational utility and/or wildlife resource that the Canal provides.;*
- 7.70 Taking account of all the information available to me I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. In the round it complements the more specific nature of Policy FP4.

Policy FP4 Wilts and Berks Canal – Route and Infrastructure

- 7.71 This policy seeks to provide a context within which the broader restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal can be implemented in the parish.
- 7.72 It comments that new development should avoid conflicting with the historic route of the Wilts and Berks Canal unless an alternative alignment of the canal can be provided as part of the development. It also comments that development should avoid impacting adversely on the infrastructure of the Canal. Finally, it comments that where impacts are unavoidable the infrastructure should be removed and, where possible and practical, reused in any alternative alignment of the Canal.
- 7.73 The policy takes a very measured approach to this matter. It reflects the ongoing work of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust which seeks to protect, conserve and improve the route of the Canal, the North Wilts Canal, and branches, with the ultimate goal of restoring a navigable link between the Kennet and Avon Canal near Melksham, the River Thames near Abingdon, and the Thames and Severn Canal near Cricklade. The Plan acknowledges that the restoration works will be a matter for others to secure. Policy FP4 effectively provides a safeguarding of the route together with an opportunity for any elements of the remaining infrastructure to be relocated into any required realigned route. The Trust suggests several detailed revisions to the policy and the wider Plan. They relate to detailed engineering and alignment issues. The issues raised are technically interesting. However, they do not need to be incorporated into the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.
- 7.74 In the round the policy meets the basic conditions. It provides a mechanism in the development plan to facilitate the restoration of the section of the Canal in the parish.

Policy P1 Parking Facilities

- 7.75 This policy sets out the Plan's approach to car parking. It has three main ambitions as follows:
- proposals should meet Oxfordshire County Council's parking standards, providing sufficient parking for residents and visitors to ensure that overspill on-street parking does not occur;
 - proposals should not lead to a reduction in on- or off-street parking; and
 - the provision of electric vehicle charging cabling shall be encouraged so that each new dwelling / apartment has direct access to charging facilities.
- 7.76 In its response to the clarification note ECPC advised about the way in which the policy brought added value beyond national and local planning policies on this matter. I am satisfied that this is the case.
- 7.77 I recommend modifications to the wording of the second and third parts of the policy. In relation to the second part of the policy I recommend that the policy refers more generally to parking provision given that a land use policy cannot control on-street parking. The recommend modification to the third part of the policy brings the clarity required by the NPPF.

Replace the second and third parts of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should not lead to a reduction in existing car parking provision in the neighbourhood area.

Proposals for the provision of electric vehicle charging cabling so that each new dwelling/apartment has direct access to charging facilities will be supported.’

Policy EV1 Green Corridors

- 7.78 This policy comments about the value of trees in general and green corridors. It comments that proposals should be designed to retain ancient, veteran, and mature trees and hedgerows which contribute to, provide, and extend green corridors in the parish. It continues by commenting that development proposals which affect trees and hedgerows should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees and hedgerows. Where trees must be lost as a result of development, it comments that they must be replaced at a ratio of greater than 1:1 within the site, to gradually increase tree numbers and coverage, with a preference for native locally found trees and fruit / nut trees. Finally it comments that responsible planting of additional trees that reduce or absorb air pollution from traffic will be supported throughout the Plan area.
- 7.79 Subject to the removal of the unnecessary reference to the neighbourhood area I am satisfied that the first part of the policy meets the basic conditions.
- 7.80 The second part of the policy is very specific in commenting that any tree replacement schemes should result in the greater number of trees on the site. In some cases, this will be practicable. In other cases, it will not be practicable. In addition, the policy does not take account of the effectiveness of a replacement tree planting scheme which can often reflect the nature, maturity, and number of trees rather than simply numbers. I recommend modifications both to this part of the policy and to the supporting text to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.
- 7.81 I recommend that this element of the second part of the policy is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text. In most cases general tree planting is not development and therefore cannot be influenced by a land use planning policy.

In the first part of the policy delete ‘in the Plan area’

Replace the second part of the policy with:

‘Where trees would be lost as a result of development proposals, they should be replaced within the site, using trees local to the parish or fruit/nut trees.’

At the end of paragraph 7.21.1 add:

‘Policy EV1 comments about circumstances where trees would be lost to new development. In such circumstances, the applications concerned should incorporate detailed or replacement trees. Ideally, they should be replaced within the site and in a way which will ensure that the number of trees is greater than the number lost and/or that the overall effect of tree cover is replaced. Clearly this will need to take account of

the overall layout and design of the site concerned and the longer-term relationship between the buildings and the replacement trees once they mature. In a more general sense, the planting of new trees does not usually need planning permission. Nevertheless, the Parish Council would support and encourage the responsible planting of additional trees throughout the parish.'

Policy EV2 Biodiversity

- 7.82 This policy has a focus on biodiversity. It comments that development proposals should maintain and enhance the local biodiversity including the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors. It also comments that development proposals should be accompanied by surveys which assess the impact of the development on local biodiversity and will be expected to demonstrate how they will provide a net gain in biodiversity and, where feasible, habitats and species, on the site, over and above the existing biodiversity situation.
- 7.83 The policy takes a general and non-prescriptive approach to this matter. I recommend a modification to the first part of the policy so that it can be applied on a proportionate basis. I also recommend the deletion of the unnecessary reference to the neighbourhood area. I recommend a detailed modification to the wording used in the second part of the policy so that it has regard to national policy on biodiversity net gain. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions.

At the beginning of the first part of the policy add: 'As appropriate to their scale nature and location,'

In the first part of the policy delete 'of the Plan area'

Replace the second sentence of the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals should seek to deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%, having regard to the requirements of section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.'

Community Aspirations

- 7.84 Section 8 of the Plan sets out a series of community aspirations. They are non-land use issues which have naturally arisen as the Plan has been prepared. They are set out in a separate part of the Plan as advised in national policy.
- 7.85 I am satisfied that the aspirations are distinctive to the parish. In some cases, they will complement the land use policies. The following aspirations are particularly innovative:
- the creation of a community hub as part of any new housing development;
 - the creation of a cycle way to Wantage and as far as the W&G Estate on the A417;
 - to re-establish football and other sports clubs to encourage greater social interactions within the village;
 - to reduce speed and air pollution from vehicles entering the village and adopt the County Council aim for 20mph speed limits in villages as soon as possible.
 - to establish a community shop;

- to deliver a safe footpath to the W&G estate and the convenience shop at Mellor's Garage from the village centre;
- the creation of a pedestrian/cycle route to Grove Business Park along Woodhill Lane; and
- Wantage Western Relief Road - provision to be made for shared cycle/pedestrian paths along the route of the relief road to ensure access by a range of means to Grove and the re-opened railway station.

Other Matters

- 7.86 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 as a result 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 as a result of the recommended modifications to the policies. It will be appropriate for VWHDC and ECPC 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.

Modification of specific text

- 7.87 VWHDC has suggested amendments to the Plan in its representations. I have found its comments very helpful. I recommend the following modifications over and above those which have already been incorporated within this report on a policy-by-policy basis. Given that the recommended modifications relate directly to typographical issues I refer simply to the reference numbers used in VWHDC's representation. They are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.

Incorporate the corrections into the Plan based on reference numbers 1-33 of the Typographical/Presentational element of VWHDC's representation

- 7.88 VWHDC has also suggested other more general refinements to the Plan. In some cases, the refinements would refine and improve the Plan. I recommend the following modifications which are necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions:

In Appendix 11 the 'non-designated heritage assets (numbered 11-15) within the curtilage of the church all date from prior to July 1948 and are therefore protected by the national designation of the church. In addition, the link to the Historic England website is non-operational. I recommend accordingly

In Appendix 11 delete the 'non-designated heritage assets' (numbers 11-15) within the curtilage of the Church and restore the link to the Historic England website (page 410).

No further work is being undertaken on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. As such I recommend the deletion of paragraphs 5.9.1 and 7.14.4 which refer to this matter.

Delete paragraphs 5.9.1 and 7.14.4.

Replace paragraph 3.7.3 with: The Plan was developed with a duration from 2022 to 2031, to ensure as much alignment as possible with the Plan period of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan (Parts 1 and 2) from 2011-2031.

In paragraph 2.3 delete 'landscape' after 'enhanced'.

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 2031. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community.
- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.
- 8.3 This report has recommended a series of modifications to the policies in the Plan. Nevertheless, it remains fundamentally unchanged in its role and purpose.

Conclusion

- 8.4 On the basis of the findings in this report I recommend to Vale of White Horse District Council that, subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report, the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to referendum.

Referendum Area

- 8.5 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by the District Council on 11 November 2016.
- 8.6 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth and efficient manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
7 March 2023