

# **Report on the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2041**

**An Examination undertaken for West Berkshire Council with the support of the Hungerford Town Council on the October 2024 version of the submitted Plan.**

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Date of Report: 27 August 2025

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## **Main Findings - Executive Summary**

From my examination of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan (HNP/the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Hungerford Town Council (HTC);
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Hungerford Neighbourhood Area as shown on the map in Figure 1.1 on page 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period during which it is to take effect: 2024 - 2041; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

### **Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan 2024–2041**

- 1.1 Hungerford, a historic market town, lies on the crossroads of key transport routes between London and Bath (the A4) and between Oxford and Salisbury (the A338) and with rail connections to the east towards Reading and London and to the west towards Exeter. Set in attractive gently undulating countryside based on the shallow valley of the River Kennet, the whole of the area is within the North Wessex National Landscape. In 2021, the population of Hungerford parish was 5,864.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 The preparation of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan (HNP), albeit then called Hungerford 2036, was initiated in 2018, following which a Steering Group was formed later the same year. Led by the Steering Group, evidence was collected, consultations were carried out and the final version of the Plan was submitted to West Berkshire Council (WBC) in October 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Census; paragraph 2.9 of the Plan.

## The Independent Examiner

- 1.3 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the HNP by WBC with the agreement of the Hungerford Town Council (HTC).
- 1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector and have experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

## The Scope of the Examination

- 1.5 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
  - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
  - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.6 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
  - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
    - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
    - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
    - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
    - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
    - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
  - Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.

- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').
- 1.7 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

## The Basic Conditions

- 1.8 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood 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 for the area;
  - be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)<sup>2</sup>; and
  - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.9 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Plan does not breach the requirement of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Approach to the Examination

### Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The current Development Plan for the Hungerford Neighbourhood Area, excluding policies relating to minerals and waste development, includes the West Berkshire Council Local Plan Review (LPR) 2023 –2041 adopted in June 2025. The Basic Conditions Statement helpfully includes in Table 4.1 an assessment of general conformity with both the strategic policies of the previously adopted Development Plan, for the period when the HNP was being prepared, and an assessment of HNP policies against the (as was) emerging policies of the West Berkshire Council Local Plan Review 2022 – 2039 (Proposed Submission) (January 2023).

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<sup>2</sup> The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

<sup>3</sup> This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers advice on how the NPPF should be implemented. It should be noted that the latest iteration of the NPPF was published on 12 December 2024. However, paragraph 239 of that version includes transitional arrangements for neighbourhood plans, stating that the revised NPPF only applies to neighbourhood plans submitted after 12 March 2025. As the Plan was submitted to WBC prior to this date, unless otherwise stated, all references in this report read across to the earlier December 2023 NPPF.

### Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, as well as those submitted which include:
- the draft Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2041 (October 2024);
  - the Map on page 5 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan relates;
  - the Consultation Statement (October 2024);
  - the Basic Conditions Statement (October 2024);
  - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report (December 2023);
  - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report (February 2024);
  - the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (January 2024);
  - the Hungerford Housing Needs Assessment (April 2019);
  - the West Berkshire Housing Needs Assessment Update (July 2022);
  - the West Berkshire Density Pattern Book (September 2019);
  - the Hungerford Primary Shopping Areas Evidence Paper (October 2023);
  - the Hungerford Local Green Spaces Justification Paper (undated);
  - the Hungerford NDP Site Assessment Report and appendices (August 2024);
  - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
  - the responses received on 15 July 2025 from HTC and on 17 July 2025 from WBC to the questions of clarification in my letter of 3 July 2025. Additional responses were also received from two other parties.<sup>4</sup>

### Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site inspection to the HNP area on 23 July 2025 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant locations referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

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<sup>4</sup> View all the documents at: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/hungerfordnp>  
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## Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. Although requests for a public hearing were received, I considered a hearing session to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

## Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix to this report.

## 3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

### Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The HNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by the HTC, which is a qualifying body. The HNP extends over all the area designated by WBC on 9 April 2018. I am satisfied it is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Hungerford area and does not relate to any land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### Plan Period

- 3.2 The Plan period is from 2024 to 2041 as clearly stated on the front cover.

### Neighbourhood Development Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.3 The Consultation Statement (CS), as illustrated in the timeline on pages 3-4 of the CS, describes the thorough preparation of the Plan with involvement of the public and various stakeholders at the stages of the process. A Steering Group was formed in 2018 early in the preparation process of the Plan. The Hungerford 2036 Plan was renamed the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan in 2022. Methods of communication included the Hungerford 2036 web site and then the HNP web site, press articles, public exhibitions, direct emails, stakeholder consultations and public meetings. The collection of the evidence for the Plan included a call for sites, public consultations in summer 2018, winter 2018/2019 and summer 2021 and a period of gathering further evidence in 2023 leading to a consultation on site options in November 2023.
- 3.4 The pre-submission Plan was published for consultation under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations from 16 February 2024 until 29 March 2024. An overview of the analysis of comments made by WBC, statutory consultees and members of the public are summarised in Appendix A of



the CS, together with the responses of the HTC and any resulting changes to the Plan.

- 3.5 The final version of the Plan was submitted to WBC on 31 October 2024. Consultation in accordance with Regulation 16 was carried out from 4 April 2025 until 23 May 2025. 47 responses were received about the Plan, including those from WBC. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the HNP, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

## Development and Use of Land

- 3.6 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

## Excluded Development

- 3.7 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.<sup>5</sup>

## Human Rights

- 3.8 The Basic Conditions Statement (BCS) notes that the Plan does not breach and is not otherwise incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. I am aware from the CS that considerable emphasis was placed throughout the consultation process to ensure that no sections of the community were isolated or excluded. I have considered this matter independently and I am satisfied that the policies will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

# 4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

## EU Obligations

- 4.1 The BCS notes that the Plan was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Due to the development of 56 homes on mostly Grade 2 agricultural land in green field locations, the SEA concluded that there would be minor negative effects on the landscape and on land resources. The SEA also recommended that the Plan could be strengthened by the inclusion of a local heritage policy; a policy in support of electric vehicle charging; a policy setting a higher biodiversity net gain than the statutory minimum of 10%; and a policy supporting connectivity of green infrastructure and green spaces.

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<sup>5</sup> See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

- 4.2 Three European sites are located within 10km of the Plan area: the River Lambourn Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain SAC and the Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC. The HRA screening and the subsequent Appropriate Assessment (AA) concluded that, whereas the HNP has 13 policies, only two had the potential to cause a likely significant effect on the European sites: the residential allocations at HUNG12 Land at Smitham Bridge Road and HUNG13 Land North of Cottrell Close, with the impact pathways to European sites being Water Quantity, Level and Flow, and Water Quality. The policies were found to have a potentially likely significant effect on the European sites with regards to Water Quantity, Level and Flow, and Water Quality.
- 4.3 However, the Berkshire Local Plan Review was subject to an HRA (West Berkshire Local Plan Review HRA, December 2022) which concluded that there would be no significant effects from the development it outlined, given the Water Resource Management Plans that have been prepared by Thames Water. The allocations within the HNP are within the quanta provided for by the West Berkshire Local Plan Review and therefore in combination impacts from this development can be excluded.
- 4.4 The possibility for these developments to impact the European sites via increased surface run-off was considered. However, given that these site allocations are located over 1km away from the SACs in question, and that the relevant policy (now adopted LPR Policy SP6) requires that development minimises surface run off utilising sustainable drainage systems, it was concluded that these developments will not have any negative impacts with regards to surface water run-off. Therefore, it can be concluded that the HNP will not provide any negative impacts on European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The statutory consultees did not dissent from these conclusions.
- 4.5 Having read the SEA and HRA related documentation and other information provided and, having considered the matter independently, I agree with the conclusions. Therefore, I am satisfied that the HNP is compatible with EU obligations as retained in UK law.

## Main Issues

- 4.6 Having considered whether the Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies. I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.
- 4.7 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a

decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.<sup>6</sup>

- 4.8 Accordingly, having regard to the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the HNP policies (i) have regard to national policy and guidance; (ii) are in general conformity with the adopted strategic planning policies; and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development?

### Vision and Objectives

- 4.9 The vision for the HNP is based on issues raised by the community during the initial stages of the consultation process. The succinct vision is described on page 15 of the Plan. A series of objectives under the aims of Housing; Employment and Economy; Getting About; Leisure, Wellbeing, Public Safety and Learning; Our Heritage; and Climate Change and Biodiversity have then been developed to help to achieve the vision and which form the basis for the thirteen specific land use based policies.

### Policy HUNG1: Housing Mix

- 4.10 Policy HUNG1 seeks to address the mixture of housing sizes and types and whether affordable or not in developments of 5 or more dwellings. In order to provide the appropriate flexibility within the policy, I recommend that Criterion B should be modified by the inclusion of considerations of location and viability. **(PM1)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance<sup>7</sup>, generally conform with Policy SP15 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions.

### Policy HUNG2: Design and Character

- 4.11 Policy HUNG2 requires new development to demonstrate high quality design and layout which respects the local character of Hungerford parish with four principles being described. There is no need for the HNP policies to repeat those from the Local Plan and therefore I shall recommend the deletion of Criterion B. d. concerning parking standards.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Local Plan Review is now adopted and so the reference to it being “emerging” in Criterion B. b. should be deleted. **(PM2)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance<sup>9</sup>, generally conform with Policy SP7 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions.

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<sup>6</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

<sup>7</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 60, 63, 65 and 66.

<sup>8</sup> NPPF: paragraph 16 f).

<sup>9</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 131, 132 and 135.

### Policy HUNG3: Important Gateways into and out of Hungerford Town

- 4.12 Policy HUNG3 seeks to protect important gateways into and out of Hungerford, particularly by mitigating the effects of development by the use of landscaping. Subject to a modification which I shall recommend to Criterion A in order to reduce ambiguity and ensure the necessary clarity, as suggested by WBC in the Regulation 16 representations, the policy would have regard to national guidance<sup>10</sup>, generally conform with Policy SP10 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM3)**

### Policy HUNG4: Retrofitting Historic Buildings for Energy Efficiency

- 4.13 Policy HUNG4 deals with the retrofitting of historic buildings in order to improve energy efficiency. Subject to the recommended inclusion of using timber framed windows “from sustainable sources”, the policy would have regard to national guidance<sup>11</sup>, generally conform with Policies SP5 and SP9 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM4)** The SEA recommended the inclusion of a local heritage policy, but LPR Policy SP9 covers the topic very thoroughly.

### Policy HUNG5: Retaining and Enhancing the Vitality and Viability of Hungerford Town Centre

- 4.14 Policy HUNG5 seeks to retain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Hungerford town centre commercial area, the boundary of which is defined on Figure 6.1 and Appendix B of the Plan. Figure 6.1 and Appendix B also define the primary shopping area where the predominant uses are expected to be retail as described in Criterion B of Policy HUNG5. I agree with the Regulation 16 comments of WBC that the frontages of the eastern side of High Street south of Park Street are not as well integrated with the other retail uses on the High Street and that this section should be deleted from the primary shopping area. This modification, which I shall recommend, would then enable Policy HUNG5 to generally conform with Policy SP18 of the LPR. **(PM5)** I am content that the use of the word “supported” is a satisfactory replacement of “required” which was in the pre-submission version of the Plan. With the recommended modification, Policy HUNG5 would also have regard to national guidance<sup>12</sup> and meet the Basic Conditions.

### Policy HUNG6: Key Walk/Cycle Routes

- 4.15 Policy HUNG6 supports development proposals which would improve walking and cycling in the Plan area. The policy has regard to national guidance<sup>13</sup>, generally conforms with Policy SP19 of the LPR and meets the Basic Conditions. Action G in the Plan supports the introduction of electric

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<sup>10</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 131, 132 and 135.

<sup>11</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 157, 159 and 196.

<sup>12</sup> NPPF: paragraph 90.

<sup>13</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 96, 108 and 110.

vehicle charging infrastructure and, in my opinion, satisfies the relevant conclusion of the SEA.

#### Policy HUNG7: Play and Youth Facilities

- 4.16 Policy HUNG7 encourages proposals which involve the provision of play and youth facilities in Hungerford. The policy has regard to national guidance<sup>14</sup>, generally conforms with Policy DM3 of the LPR and meets the Basic Conditions.

#### Policy HUNG8: Local Green Spaces

- 4.17 Policy HUNG8 designates four Local Green Spaces (LGS) as listed in the policy and shown on four maps on pages 47 - 50, together with accompanying photographs. LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.<sup>15</sup>

The LGS should also be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.<sup>16</sup>

- 4.18 However, in order to be consistent with NPPF paragraph 106, I recommend the replacement of Criterion B with appropriate wording to reflect national policy **(PM6)**. I consider that the LGS meet the designation criteria and, with that amendment, the policy has regard to national guidance, generally conforms with Policy SP10 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions.

#### Policy HUNG9: Wellbeing and Safety through Design

- 4.19 Policy HUNG9 requires development to be designed to maximise the wellbeing of its residents, visitors and users. Criterion B considers Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). However, LPR Policy SP6 covers this topic in depth, especially when read with the Technical Guidance (DEFRA Non-statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, I shall recommend the deletion of Criterion B. **(PM7)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance<sup>18</sup>, would

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<sup>14</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 96, 97 and 102.

<sup>15</sup> NPPF: paragraph 106.

<sup>16</sup> NPPF: paragraph 105.

<sup>17</sup> View at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-drainage-systems-non-statutory-technical-standards>.

<sup>18</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 96, 97, 101, 102, 131 and 135.

generally conform with Policy SP7 of the LPR and would meet the Basic Conditions.

#### Policy HUNG10: Low Energy and Energy Efficient Design

- 4.20 Policy HUNG10 considers low energy and energy efficient design. Criterion B includes five measures, a) – e), two of which duplicate policies in the LPR. Measure d) requires a SuDS based drainage system which, as stated above, is catered for comprehensively by LPR Policy SP6. In addition, measure e) aims to minimise water consumption and seeks BREEAM standards.<sup>19</sup> This is provided for in LPR Policy SP5 which then refers to LPR Policy DM7. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary repetition and confusion, I shall recommend the deletion of measures d) and e). **(PM8)** Policy HUNG10 would then have regard to national guidance<sup>20</sup>, generally conform with Policies SP5 and DM4 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions.

#### Policy HUNG11: Wildlife Friendly Development

- 4.21 Policy HUNG11 supports proposals which protect existing habitat and species. The policy also requires a minimum biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 10% and seeks wildlife friendly design features incorporated into new development. As sought in the SEA, the policy aims to secure connectivity to the wider green and blue infrastructure networks and green spaces, although there is no evidence in the Plan to justify a BNG exceeding 10%. Nevertheless, the policy has regard to national guidance<sup>21</sup>, generally conforms with Policy SP11 of the LPR and meets the Basic Conditions.

#### Site Allocations

##### Policy HUNG12: Land at Smitham Bridge Road

##### Policy HUNG13: Land North of Cottrell Close

- 4.22 Policy SP3 of the LPR defines Hungerford as a Rural Service Centre. Policy SP12 of the LPR states that in the HNP it will be necessary to identify sites to meet the level of development of approximately 55 dwellings. Therefore, the following sites have been allocated for development in the Plan: Land at Smitham Bridge Road for 44 dwellings and Land north of Cottrell Close for approximately 12 dwellings.
- 4.23 Hungerford is within the North Wessex National Landscape where government advice is that when considering applications for development permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.<sup>22</sup> I questioned HTC on whether the

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<sup>19</sup> <https://breeam.com/>

<sup>20</sup> NPPF; paragraphs 157, 158 and 159.

<sup>21</sup> NPPF; paragraphs 180 and 185.

<sup>22</sup> NPPF; paragraph 183.

terms of paragraph 183 of NPPF are met (see Q3). In my opinion, HTC demonstrated in its response that in terms of the need and impact on the local economy; the potential for developing outside the designated areas or meeting the housing need in some other way; and any detrimental effect on the environment, the allocations in the Plan are appropriate. Therefore, I consider that the terms of NPPF paragraph 183 are met.

- 4.24 I note the suggestion that, using the WBC Density Pattern Book, only 31 dwellings might be developed on Land at Smitham Bridge Road rather than 44. Nevertheless, I am persuaded by the HTC answer to my question Q4 that 44 dwellings is quite an acceptable quantity of dwellings for this allocation and also 12 dwellings is appropriate on Land north of Cottrell Close. Furthermore, Land at Smitham Bridge Road is 2.11ha in area and Land north of Cottrell Close is 0.55 ha and, therefore, the proposed density is consistent with the 20 dwellings/ha sought in LPR Policy SP1 for land within the North Wessex National Landscape.
- 4.25 Representations sought the allocation of Land at Salisbury Road and Land at Folly Dog Field for housing. My question Q2 to HTC queried why these two sites had not been allocated, the answer to which clearly demonstrates the reasoning, including the site assessment process, and from which I have no sound reason to differ. Therefore, I do not accept that that the two omitted sites should have been allocated in the Plan, either as replacements for one or other of the allocated sites or as additions. In any event, given that the LPR housing requirement has been met on the two allocated sites, Land at Smitham Bridge Road and Land north of Cottrell Close, there is no obligation to seek more sites for residential development.
- 4.26 Many representations suggested that, amongst other objections to the allocation, unacceptable highways danger would be caused by the development on Land at Smitham Bridge Road. However, when questioned, WBC stated its confidence that the required sight lines could be achieved from the site and that, although 44 dwellings would generate 26 vehicle movements in total during peak periods, this would not result in a severe impact on highway safety. Therefore, the allocation would have regard to paragraphs 114 and 115 of NPPF in respect of highway safety.
- 4.27 I note the comments about the Marsh Lane allotments but, despite the various environmental objections made in the representations, I am satisfied with the site assessment process in the preparation of the Plan which concluded that the allocations were acceptable. I also note the query about why the allocation on Land north of Cottrell Close should be linked to the adjoining cemetery and agree that such a link has advantages to pedestrians, as outlined in the answer to question Q6 from HTC, which outweighs the possible risk of disturbing the peace and quiet which visitors to the cemetery would wish to enjoy.



- 4.28 Accordingly, I consider that Policy HUNG12 and Policy HUNG13 have regard to national guidance<sup>23</sup>, generally conform with Policies SP1, SP3 and SP12 of the LPR and meet the Basic Conditions.

### West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR)

- 4.29 The submission Plan includes references to the emerging West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) which was adopted in June 2025. Therefore, various updates should be included in the Plan to make it suitable for referendum. Emerging Policy SP18 has become SP15. Other policy references such as SP1, SP6, SP7 and DM4 remain the same, but are no longer “emerging”.<sup>24</sup> I recommend that the appropriate modifications should be made. **(PM9)**

### Community Actions

- 4.30 The Plan includes Actions A-O within the various sections of the Plan which lists projects which the community is seeking but cannot be delivered through land-use planning policies. Therefore, these are not considered as part of the examination and will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. Nevertheless, they represent aspirations or actions which would benefit the community and demonstrate one of the valuable associated attributes of the neighbourhood planning process.<sup>25</sup>

### Overview

- 4.31 Therefore, on the evidence before me, with the recommended modifications, I consider that the policies within the HNP are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the LPR, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.32 A consequence of the acceptance of the recommended modifications would be that amendments will have to be made to the explanation within the Plan in order to make it logical and suitable for the referendum. Further minor amendments might also include incorporating factual updates, correcting inaccuracies, typographical and punctuation errors, any text improvements suggested by WBC in their Regulation 16 consultation response and any other similar minor or consequential changes in agreement with WBC. None of these alterations would affect the ability of the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and could be undertaken as minor, non-material changes.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> NPPF: paragraphs 60, 69, 70 and 71.

<sup>24</sup> See answer to question Q1 from WBC.

<sup>25</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-004-20190509.

<sup>26</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.



## 5. Conclusions

### Summary

- 5.1 The Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the HNP, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify eight of the thirteen policies to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

### The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The HNP, as modified, has no policy which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be that of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### Concluding Comments

- 5.4 The HTC, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for producing a succinct Plan. The Plan is logical, informative and very well illustrated. The Consultation Statement and the Basic Conditions Statement were concise and very useful. The Plan also benefitted from the constructive comments from WBC at the Regulation 14 stage and the helpful responses from the HTC and WBC to my questions. Subject to the recommended modifications, the HNP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and should enable the extremely attractive character and appearance of Hungerford to be maintained whilst enabling sustainable development to proceed.

*Andrew Mead*

Examiner

## Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification no. (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Policy HUNG1	Delete Criterion B and substitute: <b>"B. In determining any departure from the recommended mix, regard will be given to:</b> <b>a. any physical or site factors which limit the mix;</b> <b>b. the location;</b> <b>c. if there is clear evidence for the need for a particular type of housing, e.g. specialist older persons' housing such as bungalows;</b> <b>d. site specific viability."</b>
PM2	Policy HUNG2	Delete "emerging" from Criterion B. b. Delete Criterion B. d.
PM3	Policy HUNG3	Delete Criterion A and substitute: <b>"A. Development proposals should conserve and enhance the rural setting of the important gateways into Hungerford. Proposals should include appropriate landscaping which minimises the impact of development upon the open character of the countryside."</b>
PM4	Policy HUNG4	Insert into the second sentence of Criterion B: "Such measures should seek to use timber framed windows <b>from sustainable sources</b> , with alternative materials ...".
PM5	Policy HUNG5	Amend Diagram 6.1 and Appendix B to remove the section south of Park Street and east of High Street from the primary shopping area.
PM6	Policy HUNG8	Delete Criterion B and substitute: <b>"B. Decisions on managing development within the Local Green Spaces should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts. Support will be given to proposals that would enhance the value or significance of the Local Green Space."</b>

PM7	Policy HUNG9	Delete Criterion B.
PM8	Policy HUNG10	Delete Criteria B. d) and B. e).
PM9	Throughout the Plan.	Amend Policy "SP18" to <b>"SP15"</b> . Delete "emerging" from phrases including Policies SP1, SP6, SP7 and DM4.