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Report on Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan 2013 - 2023

An Examination undertaken for Aylesbury Vale District Council with the support of the Long Crendon Parish Council on the March 2017 Submission version of the Plan.

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the 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 – Long Crendon Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Neighbourhood Plan area, the boundary of which is coterminous with the Parish boundary, as identified on the Designation Map at Page 7 of the Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – from 2013 to 2023; 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

Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2023

- 1.1 Long Crendon is an attractive village and parish within Aylesbury Vale district, close to the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire boundary. It is situated some 9 miles south-west of Aylesbury and 2 miles north-west of Thame (in Oxfordshire). The village lies on the edge of the Chiltern Ridge overlooking the Thame Valley to the south-east and is within the Brill and Winchenden Hills Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), as designated in the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP).
- 1.2 The village contains 116 listed buildings, including a number of late Medieval houses and a significant number of surviving timber or cruck framed structures and one Scheduled Monument. There are two Conservation Areas within the village, the High Street Conservation Area and the Bicester Road Conservation Area, each of which contains a significant number of listed buildings and other buildings and structures of local heritage importance.

- 1.3 The village centre, containing a small number of shops and amenities, is at The Square. The village is served by limited bus services to/from Aylesbury and Thame, but there are no bus services to the nearest railway station at Haddenham and Thame Parkway which is some 4 miles to the south of the village. Accordingly, there is a high dependency on car travel for many journeys and 54% of households have two or more vehicles.
- 1.4 Beyond the village, the surrounding countryside contains some sensitive landscapes and due to the elevated position of the village itself there are some important views which contribute to defining the character of the village.
- 1.5 Work commenced on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan in July 2015 with the establishment of a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The first Community Workshop was held in August 2015 and further community events were held in October 2015 and January 2016. Consultation on the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Plan took place in October-November 2016. The Submission Plan was published in March 2017, and the Regulation 16 Consultation took place between 8 March and 19 April 2017 with a total of 19 representations made during that period.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.6 As the Plan has now reached the Examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan by Aylesbury Vale District Council, with the agreement of the Long Crendon Parish Council.
- 1.7 I am a chartered town planner, with over 40 years of experience in planning, and have worked in both the public and private sectors. I have also served on a Government working group considering measures to improve the Local Plan system and undertaken peer reviews on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service.
- 1.8 I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Draft Plan. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.9 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.

1.10 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';
 - 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; and
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ('the 2012 Regulations').

1.11 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

1.12 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; and
 - Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.13 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the neighbourhood plan should not be likely to have a significant effect on a European Site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European Offshore Marine Site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 2007), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Aylesbury Vale district, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the AVDLP 2004 and the saved policies of that Plan.
- 2.2 The emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) will in due course replace the saved policies from the AVDLP. The Pre-Submission Consultation stage of the VALP is expected to take place in Summer 2017, with the Plan's formal Examination and Adoption anticipated during late 2017 and early 2018. At this juncture, this is clearly an aspirational, best case scenario timetable.
- 2.3 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. PPG makes clear that whilst a draft neighbourhood plan is not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan, the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the Basic Conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. It cites, as an example, that up-to-date housing needs evidence is relevant to the question of whether the housing supply policy in a neighbourhood contributes to the achievement of sustainable development¹. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF also provides that "The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area". On this basis, I make appropriate reference to Aylesbury Vale's

¹ PPG Reference ID 41-009-20160211.

emerging Local Plan in this report.

Submitted Documents

- 2.4 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the draft Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2023, dated March 2017;
 - the Neighbourhood Designation Map on Page 7 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement, dated March 2017;
 - the Basic Conditions Statement, dated February 2017;
 - the Site Assessment Report, dated March 2017;
 - the Local Green Space and Landscape Study Report, dated March 2017;
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Final Report, dated February 2017.

Site Visit

- 2.5 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 19 May 2017 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations or Public Hearing

- 2.6 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections and comments regarding the plan, and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. I have fully considered the request made in certain Regulation 16 representations to hold a public hearing, but in those cases I am satisfied that the material supplied is sufficiently comprehensive for me to be able to deal with the matters raised under the written representations procedure, and that there was not a requirement to convene a Public Hearing as part of this Examination.

Modifications

- 2.7 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 in full in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by Long Crendon Parish Council which is a qualifying body. An application to Aylesbury Vale District Council for the Parish to be designated a neighbourhood planning area was made on 4 August 2015, and was approved by the District Council on 7 October 2015.
- 3.2 It is the only neighbourhood plan for Long Crendon, and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies clearly the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2013 to 2023.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 The Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in response to the Localism Act 2011. Work commenced on the preparation of the Plan in July 2015 when a Steering Group was established comprising members of the Parish Council. A variety of methods were used to communicate with the community and stakeholders during the plan preparation period. The Steering Group met a total of 29 times between September 2015 and the submission of the Pre-Submission Plan in October 2016. The first Community Workshop was held in August 2015 and this was followed by two further Community Events in October 2015 and January 2016. The public events were publicised within the community by a variety of methods, including notices in the village magazine, The Crendon Crier, and on the village website. Each household in the parish received an invitation to the events.
- 3.5 The outcomes from the Community Events, together with comments from residents and stakeholders, informed the preparation of the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan which was published for consultation under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations, between 10 October and 21 November 2016. A total of 251 responses were received during that period, including comments from key stakeholders and statutory consultees. The Consultation Statement (at Section 3) summarises the Regulation 14 responses and the Steering Group's response to the matters raised and, where appropriate, amendments to the emerging Plan.
- 3.6 The Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan was formally submitted to Aylesbury Vale District Council on 1 March 2017. The Submitted Plan was subject to further consultation in March/April 2017 under Regulation 16 and I take account of the 19 responses then received in writing this

report, as well as the earlier Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that the consultation process has been open and transparent, has met the legal requirements for procedural compliance and has had regard to the guidance in the PPG on plan preparation.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.7 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

- 3.8 The Plan does not include any provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.

Human Rights

- 3.9 The Basic Conditions Statement (at Section 6) states that the Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights, and complies with the Human Rights Act, 1998. From my assessment of the Plan, its accompanying evidence base studies and the consultation responses made to the Plan at the Regulations 14 and 16 stages, I am satisfied that none of the objectives and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Many will have a positive impact. Aylesbury Vale District Council is satisfied that the Plan is compatible with Human Rights requirements. I have considered this matter independently and I have found no reason to disagree with that position.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan was screened for SEA by Aylesbury Vale District Council in September 2015, which found that it was necessary to undertake SEA under the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004. The District Council also recommended that, although not a requirement, the SEA should incorporate a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to consider more widely the balance of sustainability. With regards to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), the District Council found that the Plan contains broadly similar levels of development to those assessed as part of a district-wide HRA Screening, and that on this basis a further HRA Screening is unlikely to be necessary. Natural England and Historic England have not raised any concerns on any matters concerning the SEA, or the need for HRA Screening. On the basis

of the information provided and my independent consideration, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations.

- 4.2 The Plan is therefore accompanied by a SEA Final Report (dated February 2017) in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42. A number of representations state that the SEA is flawed, citing a recent High Court judgment² and the quashing of parts of the Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan as being factors applicable to the Long Crendon Plan's SEA. I have given careful consideration to these representations and to the relevant guidance in the PPG. In particular, I have considered the point made in a number of representations that the SEA should "...outline the reasons the alternatives were selected, the reasons the rejected options were not taken forwards and the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives".³
- 4.3 I have considered the methodology of the SEA process, as set out on pages 7/8 of the SEA Final Report and am satisfied that the methodology employed has taken account of Plan options and alternatives for testing. With regard to the policies allocating land for development, which are Policies LC2 and LC3, I am further satisfied that alternative sites, derived from the Site Assessment Report, have been considered and that the SEA Final report (at Section 9) has provided an appropriate level of information and reasoning as to why the alternatives were not selected as part of the Plan's preferred spatial strategy. I do not consider that the matters that have been drawn to my attention regarding the High Court judgment concerning the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan, and the Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan, are applicable to this Plan and specifically to the SEA process undertaken for this Plan.
- 4.4 I conclude on this matter that the SEA is robust and comprehensive, and has given the necessary (and proportionate) level of assessment to the environmental effects resulting from the policies and proposals contained in the Submission Plan.

Main Issues

- 4.5 Having read the Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan submission document, the Regulation 16 consultation responses, the supporting evidence base documents for the Plan and having undertaken the site visit, I consider that there are three main issues relating to the Basic Conditions for this Examination. These are:

² R. (Stonegate Homes Ltd.) v Horsham District Council and Henfield Parish Council [2016] EWHC 2512 (Admin).

³ PPG Reference ID 11-038-20150209.

- whether the Plan period (2013-2023) is of an appropriate length to provide a sound basis for the future planning of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
- whether the policies and proposals for housing and employment, together with the vision and objectives of the Plan, have regard to national planning policy and guidance, the achievement of sustainable development and are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the AVDLP (and align with the emerging VALP);
- whether the policies for the built and natural environment will secure and maintain the important historic and landscape character of Long Crendon and its Parish.

Issue 1 – The Plan Period

- 4.6 Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan is relatively unusual in that it is only addressing a Plan period of 10 years (from 2013 to 2023). A number of Regulation 16 consultation responses draw attention to this fact and state that this will constrain or restrict the delivery of housing in the village, contrary to the advice contained in the NPPF regarding the need to significantly boost housing supply. Such representations also state that the approach of only addressing the development needs in Long Crendon for the period up to 2023 is in potential conflict with the emerging VALP which covers the period up to 2033, and particularly with its draft policies for housing growth over that longer period.
- 4.7 There are no hard and fast rules regarding the length of the Plan period for a Neighbourhood Plan. The NPPF states (at paragraph 184) that *“Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan”,* and also that *“Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies”.*
- 4.8 The PPG states⁴ that *“Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision or grant planning permission for the development they want to see”.*
- 4.9 National guidance therefore acknowledges that a Neighbourhood Plan can address a period of 10 years and the key issue (as considered under Issue

⁴ PPG Reference ID 41-003-20140306.

2 below), in my assessment, is whether the Long Crendon NP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted AVDLP and aligns with the emerging VALP which will set the spatial and growth strategy for Aylesbury district over the period 2013-2033. I am satisfied from my reading of the Plan, its supporting evidence and the representations, that the principle of a Plan period extending for 10 years, rather than for a longer period, is consistent with national policy and guidance.

Furthermore, I note that the Plan contains a commitment to commence a first review of the Plan in time to roll it forward beyond 2023⁵ in line with the development plan cycle. It is of course also the case that the VALP is not due to reach its Pre-Submission Consultation stage until later this year and an Inspector's report following the Examination of the Local Plan is unlikely in my view, having examined local plans, to be available until 2018 (see paragraph 2.2 above). I do not consider that it is reasonable, as suggested in some representations, to delay the Examination of the Plan until after the outcome of the VALP Examination.

- 4.10 I conclude on this issue that the Plan period (2013-2023) is appropriate and justified, is consistent with Government policy and guidance and I do not recommend any modifications to the Plan arising from my consideration of this matter.

Issue 2 – Housing, Employment and the Promotion of Sustainable Development

- 4.11 The NPPF (at paragraph 14) sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to state (at paragraph 16) that Neighbourhood Plans should support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; they should also plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan. Paragraph 47 onwards of the NPPF sets out the approach "To boost significantly the supply of housing" which local planning authorities should follow.
- 4.12 Section 6 of the Plan contains the Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies for Long Crendon Parish up to 2023. The Planning Policy Context is set out in Section 4 and I am satisfied that the key issues arising from the NPPF, the saved policies of the AVDLP and the emerging strategic policies in the VALP, as they affect Long Crendon, have been appropriately described and referenced in that section.
- 4.13 The central issue that arises from the Plan period under consideration (2013-2023) is whether the Plan contains policies and proposals that are appropriate to meet the development requirements for Long Crendon for that period. In that context, the primary matter to be addressed is whether the Plan contains sufficient allocations of land to meet housing

⁵ It is notable in this context that Section 4 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 provides new provisions (once commenced) to make the review of a made neighbourhood plan a much less onerous process.

need over that period. The housing need requirement for Long Crendon that was contained in the Draft VALP that was published for consultation in the Summer of 2016 was 231 new homes for the period 2013-2033, which represented a growth of 22% in the baseline housing stock. The District Council has since resolved (in December 2016) that the VALP will not contain a percentage based housing requirement approach and instead will be based upon a capacity/infrastructure based approach, with site allocations rather than a housing requirement for settlements.

- 4.14 The position to be adopted in the VALP with regard to future housing growth in Long Crendon is therefore not yet clear or finalised and indeed may yet be liable to further change following Examination of that Plan. This uncertainty also supports, in my judgment, the decision to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan for a 10 year period, as the long-term housing requirements for Aylesbury Vale district as a whole and specifically for Long Crendon, remain to be tested and confirmed in the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.15 As previously noted, the Plan has based its proposed housing supply on a calculation derived from the figure (231 new homes) contained in the Draft VALP that was published for consultation in Summer 2016. In summary, it divides the VALP Plan period into three periods, from 2013-2016 to take account of commitments in the form of planning permissions made during that period, from 2016 to 2023 to take account (on a pro rata basis) of the VALP target for that period and from 2023 to 2033 which is not further considered, being beyond the Plan period. It is calculated that the residual housing requirement to be met by allocations in the Plan totals 82 new dwellings. Of that total, planning permissions have since been granted for 60 new dwellings on two sites, for 19 dwellings on land off Wainwrights (Ref: 15/03650/AOP – planning permission granted on 21st December 2016) and for up to 41 dwellings on land at Madge’s Farm, Cheersley Road (Ref: 15/02806/AOP – planning permission granted on 22nd December, 2016). The Plan therefore needs to make new allocations for a total of 22 new dwellings on the basis of the calculation set out above. Nevertheless, I consider that the Plan does need to be much clearer that it makes provision, through its policies and allocations, for the development of at least 82 new dwellings in the Plan area up to 2023, and accordingly I recommend Proposed Modification 1 (**PM1**) to Policy LC1 (see also below) to address that point.
- 4.16 Policies LC1-LC5 in the Plan address future development in the Plan area, including housing and employment. Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary) defines a settlement boundary (which is shown on the Policies Map) within which proposals for infill development will be supported, and beyond which proposals for development will only be supported if they are necessary or suited to a countryside location. I have given careful consideration to the precise definition of the settlement boundary, and have concluded that it is appropriate in the context of the Plan period under consideration (2013-2023). However, I am in little doubt that the boundary will require review to address development requirements for

Long Crendon in the period post-2023 when they are confirmed in the adopted VALP. Policy LC1 defines the only form of development that will be acceptable within the proposed settlement boundary as being infill development. I consider that this is too restrictive and would exclude some otherwise acceptable redevelopment schemes, such as those envisaged in Policy LC4 (see paragraph 4.18 below), and accordingly I recommend the deletion of the word "infill" as Proposed Modification 2 **(PM2)**. I am also concerned that the phrase "..necessary or suited to a countryside location .." with regard to development in the countryside is not further defined within the Plan, whether it be agricultural development, leisure uses, rural employment uses or other types of acceptable rural development. Accordingly, I recommend the deletion of that phrase, and its replacement with the words ".. appropriate forms of development within rural areas .." as Proposed Modification 3 **(PM3)**.

- 4.17 Policies LC2 and LC3 comprise proposed allocations of land for new housing at Westfield Road (approximately 13 dwellings) and off Sandy Lane (approximately 10 dwellings) respectively. I am satisfied that the policies each provide sufficient guidance for the satisfactory development of these sites for new housing, which in combination could yield an approximate total of 23 new dwellings.
- 4.18 Policy LC4 addresses the need for specialist retirement, including extra-care, accommodation within the village. This policy defines potential development as being "infill housing development", and I also consider that this is far too restrictive and could exclude some otherwise acceptable forms of development. Accordingly, I recommend the deletion of the word "infill" in this policy as Proposed Modification 4 **(PM4)**.
- 4.19 Policy LC5 promotes additional employment development at three designated employment sites. I have visited each of the sites, which are all suitable for continued and additional employment development. However, in my assessment, the policy does not adequately define the nature of employment development and accordingly I recommend that the phrase "within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8" be added to the text of the policy, as Proposed Modification 5 **(PM5)**.
- 4.20 I have given careful consideration to those representations which seek to allocate additional sites within the Plan area for new housing, either by revisions to the Long Crendon Settlement Boundary to include additional land beyond the presently defined boundary or by the allocation of sites within the Settlement Boundary that had been rejected during the Plan preparation process. In this context, I have considered the Site Assessment Report (March 2017) and SEA (February 2017) and I am satisfied that the assessment of individual sites has been undertaken comprehensively, taking account of all relevant planning considerations and that potentially suitable development sites were taken forward for assessment through the SEA process. I am further satisfied that this has been appropriately recorded within the SEA Final Report, including the

assessment of reasonable policy alternatives (as set out in Section 9 of the report).

- 4.21 My first conclusion on this issue is that the Plan, together with its accompanying evidence base material and SEA, has sought to address the development requirements for Long Crendon up to 2023 and that the identification of potential development sites and ultimately the sites included in the Submission Plan has taken place in accordance with a robust process that accords with national policy and guidance on this matter. I am satisfied that the Plan has regard to national policy as set out in the NPPF and that the national policy context has been appropriately referenced within the SEA and the Plan itself, notably at Section 4. I do not recommend any modifications on that point.
- 4.22 I further conclude that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the AVDLP (2004) and aligns the emerging VALP (as at 2016). The Plan has taken account of the development requirements set out in the Draft VALP (2016) for the first 10 years of the VALP plan period, and meets those requirements after due consideration of commitments made through planning permissions in the period 2013-2016. In my assessment, this is a realistic mechanism for addressing the strategic policies of the emerging VALP, which will not be adopted until 2018 and where there remains some uncertainty over the eventual quantum and distribution of development. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared on the best available information relating to the VALP, and contains a commitment to review the Plan once the VALP has been finalised. This is a sensible and pragmatic position for the Plan in the prevailing circumstances and I do not recommend any modifications on matters concerning general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan. I further note that Aylesbury Vale District Council has raised no concerns on this matter, and consider that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions on this issue. I agree with that view.
- 4.23 Finally, I also conclude that the Plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. I am satisfied that the SEA process has been underpinned by the key principles of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental considerations – and that those principles have driven the assessment of policies and sites. I consider that those principles have been carried forward into the Submission Plan, through its Vision, Objectives, Policies, Policy Designations and Site Allocations with sufficient clarity. Accordingly, I do not recommend any modifications on this matter.

Issue 3 – The Historic and Landscape Character of Long Crendon

- 4.24 I am clear from my reading of the Plan and its supporting evidence, and from my site visit, that the surrounding landscape plays a special role in defining the setting and character of Long Crendon. Much of that landscape is within the Brill and Winchendon Hills AAL. The protection of

AALs is addressed at the district-wide level by saved Policy RA8 in the AVDLP.

- 4.25 I have therefore given careful consideration to the policies of the Plan that address matters of historic and landscape character. In the main, these matters are addressed by Policies LC9-LC14. I have also paid regard to the representations submitted by Natural England and Historic England on various matters concerning the natural and historic environments.
- 4.26 With regard to Policy LC14 (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity), Natural England broadly support the policy, but are concerned that it does not address the potential to create connected green spaces, to assist in species adaptation to climate change. I agree with that point and recommend Proposed Modification 6 to the policy (**PM6**) to insert additional policy wording to address that matter.
- 4.27 Historic England also broadly support the policies in the Plan, but do raise a number of detailed points regarding certain parts of the Plan to ensure that appropriate and accurate references to historic assets and archaeology are made where necessary. I have considered the points raised by Historic England and do agree that a number of modifications are necessary to ensure that the Plan is both accurate and contains the correct policy wording to address planning proposals that affect the historic environment. Accordingly, I recommend modifications to Section 3.3 (Special Historic and Landscape Character) to correct the data on heritage assets, together with an appropriate reference to Appendix C (**PM7**); to Section 6.1 (Vision) to provide wording that is more consistent with the NPPF (**PM8**); to Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary) to introduce a policy reference to the historic environment and heritage assets (**PM9**); to Policy LC2 (New Homes on land off Westfield Road) to provide wording that is more consistent with the NPPF (**PM10**); to Policy LC3 (New Homes off Sandy Lane) to provide wording that is more consistent with the NPPF and to refer to the need to undertake an archaeological investigation prior to development (**PM11**) and to Policy LC9 (General Design Principles), again to provide policy wording that has appropriate regard to the terms of the NPPF (**PM12**).
- 4.28 With these recommended Modifications, I consider that the Plan will provide a sound basis for the consideration of development proposals in the Plan area that affect the historic and landscape character of Long Crendon, having regard to national policy and guidance and in general conformity with the saved policies of the AVDLP.

Other Matters

- 4.29 From my consideration of the Regulation 16 responses, there are two other matters that require modifications to the Plan. Firstly, Buckinghamshire County Council object to Policy LC7 (Long Crendon Primary School) and in fact seek the deletion of the policy. I do not share that view, but do agree that the wording of the policy does require

amendment to more accurately reflect the position of the Education Authority on the potential expansion of the primary school. Accordingly, I recommend a Proposed Modification to that effect (**PM13**). Secondly, Buckinghamshire County Council further seek an amendment to Policy LC14 (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity) to better define the protection of rare and threatened species in the assessment of development proposals. I agree with that point, and recommend a Proposed Modification (**PM14**) to that effect, which has proper regard to national policy.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Long Crendon 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 for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text 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 or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, has no policies or proposals 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 the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 5.4 It is clear that the Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan is the product of much hard work during the past two years by the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the many individuals and stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the Plan. There is no doubt in my view that the Plan reflects the aspirations and objectives of the Long Crendon community for the future development of their community up to 2023. The output is a plan which should help guide the Parish's development over that period in a positive way, and it should also assist good decision-making on planning applications by Aylesbury Vale District Council.

- 5.5 In the interests of completeness, I should mention that the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27 April i.e. during the course of the examination. Only Sections 1 to 7 are concerned with neighbourhood planning and these provisions will not come into effect for the time being.

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Page 22	<p>Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary)</p> <p>Add new 2nd paragraph to the policy as follows:</p> <p>“The Plan is required to make provision for the development of at least 82 new dwellings during the Plan period. This will be achieved by the development of the sites allocated in Policies LC2 and LC3, and by other appropriate developments which satisfy the policies of the Plan.”</p>
PM2	Page 22	<p>Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary)</p> <p>Delete the word “infill” in the 3rd line of the policy.</p>
PM3	Page 22	<p>Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary)</p> <p>Delete the words “necessary or suited to a countryside location” in the 7th line of the policy and replace with “appropriate forms of development within rural areas”.</p>
PM4	Page 25	<p>Policy LC4 (Housing for Older People)</p> <p>Delete the word “infill” in the 4th line of the policy.</p>
PM5	Page 26	<p>Policy LC5 (Key Employment Sites)</p> <p>Insert the words “within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8” after “additional employment” in the 1st line of the policy</p>
PM6	Page 33	<p>Policy LC14 (Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity)</p> <p>Add new sentence at the end of the 2nd paragraph of the policy wording as follows:</p>

		“Proposals which lead to the creation of connected green spaces to assist in species adaptation to climate change will also be supported.”
PM7	Page 10	<p>Section 3.3 – Special Historic & Landscape Character</p> <p>Amend 2nd sentence of this section to read: “There are 116 listing entries for Long Crendon Parish on the National Heritage List for England, including the grade 1 listed church of St. Mary, Notley Abbey House, enclosing wall at Notley Abbey House and dovecote to north-east of Notley Farm and three grade II* listed entries.” Delete existing text of that sentence.</p> <p>Add new 3rd sentence to this section to read: “There is also one Scheduled Monument in the Parish on the National Heritage List for England.”</p> <p>Add new 4th sentence to this section to read: “Appendix C contains a list of the locally important buildings of note in the Parish, which also make an important contribution to the sense of place and local identity.”</p>
PM8	Page 20	<p>Section 6.1 – Vision</p> <p>Delete the word “preserved” in the 2nd line of this section, and replace with “conserved and enhanced”.</p>
PM9	Page 22	<p>Policy LC1 (Long Crendon Settlement Boundary)</p> <p>Add new text to the final line of the policy, such that the final line will now read:</p> <p>“.. policies relating to the historic environment, heritage assets, landscape character and protecting the natural environment.”</p>
PM10	Page 23	<p>Policy LC2 (New Homes on land off Westfield Road)</p> <p>Amend clause iii) of the policy to now read:</p>

		"Each scheme has full regard to the special interest, character and appearance of the setting of nearby Listed Buildings...etc".
PM11	Page 24	<p>Policy LC3 (New Homes off Sandy Lane)</p> <p>Amend clause ii) of the policy to now read: "Each scheme has full regard to the special interest, character and appearance of the setting of the Long Crendon Conservation Area...etc".</p> <p>Add new 3rd paragraph to the text of the policy to read: "Development proposals should include provision for an archaeological investigation of each parcel of land prior to the commencement of any development."</p>
PM12	Page 28	<p>Policy LC9 (General Design Principles)</p> <p>Add new Clause viii) to read: "The proposals take full account of any relevant considerations concerning the historic environment and heritage assets in the area."</p>
PM13	Page 27	<p>Policy LC7 (Long Crendon Primary School)</p> <p>Amend the text of the policy to read: "Proposals for the provision of additional school facilities at Long Crendon Primary School, if that proves to be necessary, will be supported, provided that this does not adversely affect the amenities of local residents and there are sufficient off-street car parking spaces available".</p>
PM14	Page 33	<p>Policy LC14 (Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity)</p> <p>Amend clause iv) of the policy to read: "protect national and local, notable rare and threatened, species." and delete existing text.</p>