



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2034

An Examination undertaken for Dorset Council with the support of Alderholt Parish Council on the April 2024 submission version of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Date of Report: 22 August 2024

Contents

Main Findings - Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction and Background	4
Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022–2034	4
The Independent Examiner	4
The Scope of the Examination	5
The Basic Conditions.....	6
2. Approach to the Examination	6
Planning Policy Context	6
Submitted Documents.....	7
Site Visit.....	7
Written Representations with or without Public Hearing	7
Modifications	7
3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights.....	8
Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area	8
Plan Period.....	8
Neighbourhood Development Plan Preparation and Consultation	8
Development and Use of Land	8
Excluded Development.....	9
Human Rights.....	9
4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions	9
EU Obligations	9
Main Issues.....	10
Vision and Objectives.....	10
GENERAL DESIGN GUIDANCE.....	10
Policy 1. Settlement pattern, layout and densities.....	10
Policy 2. People friendly streets and paths	10
Policy 3. Parking Provision	10
Policy 4. Respecting local character in the design	10
Policy 5. Environmental performance and sustainability	10
Policy 6. Landscaping.....	10
FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREAS.....	11
Policy 7. Meeting Local Needs - Housing.....	11
Policy 8. The Village “High Street”.....	12
Policy 9. The Trailway	13
Policy 10. Meeting Local Needs – Employment	13

Policy 11. Revised Village Envelope	13
Policy 12. Alderholt Nursery, East of Ringwood Road	14
Policy 13. Paddock South of Daggons Road.....	14
Policy 14. Land South of Blackwater Grove	14
SAFEGUARDED AREAS AND FEATURES	14
Policy 15. Safeguarding Local Facilities	14
Policy 16. Important Local Green Spaces.....	14
Policy 17. Key Landscape Features	15
Policy 18. Important Views	15
Policy 19. Non-designated Heritage Assets around Alderholt.....	15
National Landscapes	15
Overview	15
5. Conclusions.....	16
Summary.....	16
The Referendum and its Area	16
Concluding Comments	16
Appendix: Modifications	18

Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan (ANP/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 Alderholt Parish Council (APC);
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Alderholt Neighbourhood Area as shown on Map 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period during which it is to take effect: 2022 - 2034; 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

Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022–2034

- 1.1 Alderholt is located in attractive countryside on the eastern edge of Dorset, about 4 km west of Fordingbridge (Hampshire) and 10km north of Ringwood (Hampshire) between the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire National Landscape the South East Dorset Green Belt to the south. The main road through the parish is the B3078 which connects the village of Cranborne with Fordingbridge. In 2021, the population of Alderholt parish was about 3,200.¹
- 1.2 The preparation of a neighbourhood plan for Alderholt began in 2020. Evidence was collected and consultations were held during the intervening period and the final version of the Plan was submitted to Dorset Council (DC) in May 2024, representing about 5 years' work for those involved.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.3 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the ANP by DC with the agreement of APC.

¹ 2021 Census.

- 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.

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, 3 Princes Street, Bath BA1 1HL

Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 10100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84

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)²; 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 2017.³

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

2.1 The current Development Plan for the Alderholt area, excluding policies relating to minerals and waste development, includes the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan Core Strategy (CEDLP) which was adopted by East Dorset District Council in 2014. This is being replaced by the Dorset Council Local Plan. The Development Plan also includes a number of saved policies from the former 2002 East Dorset Local Plan. The recently adopted Local Development Scheme for Dorset Council suggests an adoption date for the Local Plan of May 2027.

2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).⁴ In addition, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers advice on how the NPPF should be implemented.

² The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

³ 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.

⁴ A revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2023. All references in this report read across to the latest December 2023 version. The government is presently consulting on further changes to the NPPF (albeit these are not likely to be published in final form until later in 2024): [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system)

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, 3 Princes Street, Bath BA1 1HL

Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 10100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84

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 Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2034 (submission version April 2024);
- Map 1 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan relates;
- the Consultation Statement (April 2024);
- the Basic Conditions Report (March 2024);
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (April 2024);
- the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) report (May 2024);
- Alderholt Design Guidance and Codes (September 2023);
- Site Options and Assessment (July 2023);
- Draft Alderholt Village Plan (August 1971);
- Hutchins Extract 1868;
- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
- the joint response dated 29 July 2024 from Alderholt Parish Council and Dorset Council to the questions of clarification in my letter of 16 July 2024.⁵

Site Visit

2.4 I made an unaccompanied site inspection to the ANP area on 12 July 2024 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant locations referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions 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. No requests for a hearing session were received.

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.

⁵ View all the documents at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/alderholt-neighbourhood-plan>

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The ANP has been prepared and submitted for examination by the APC, which is a qualifying body. The ANP extends over all the parish designated by the then East Dorset District Council in March 2019. I am satisfied it is the only Neighbourhood Plan for Alderholt parish and does not relate to any land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.2 The Plan period is from 2022 to 2034 as clearly stated on the front cover.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.3 The Consultation Statement (CS) describes the thorough preparation of the Plan with involvement of the public and various stakeholders at the stages of the process. The CS describes five stages: 1. Setting the Vision and Objectives; 2. Landowner Consultations about Site Options; 3. Options Consultation with the public, including publicity in the parish magazine, on the Parish Council web site and at drop-in sessions; 4. Landowner Consultation on Local Green Spaces; and 5. The Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation.
- 3.4 The pre-submission Plan was published for consultation under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations from 4 December 2023 until 19 January 2024. An overview of the analysis of responses made by statutory consultees and members of the public, and the matters raised, are summarised in the tables on pages 17 to 62 of the CS together with the comments of the Neighbourhood Plan Group and any resulting changes to the Plan.
- 3.5 The final version of the Plan was submitted to DC on 13 May 2024. Consultation in accordance with Regulation 16 was carried out from 15 May 2024 until 25 June 2024. 32 responses were received about the Plan, including those from DC. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the ANP, 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'.⁶

Human Rights

- 3.8 I have read the Basic Conditions Report (BCR) which states that no issues have been raised in relation to the possible contravention of Human Rights. These are fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under 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 BCR notes that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under EU Directive 2001/42/EC and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) was prepared. The SEA concluded that the Plan would have significant positive effects in relation to community well-being objectives; minor positive effects in relation to the historic environment; broadly neutral to minor positive effects in relation to climate change and to biodiversity; minor negative effects in relation to land, soil and water due to the loss of greenfield sites and agricultural land; and minor negative effects in relation to transport because of the likely increased reliance on private vehicles for employment, shopping, education, etc. Statutory consultees did not dissent from these conclusions and raised no objections to the submitted Plan.
- 4.2 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) under EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (*sic*)⁷ which was prepared identified various issues concerning the proposed allocations for residential development and the proposed Trailway extension to the west of Alderholt. Amendments were made to the Plan after the Regulation 14 consultation and prior to submission. Natural England confirmed that it has no objections to the proposed Plan and that it would be appropriate for a conclusion of no adverse effect on the integrity of the designated habitats and international sites to be reached.⁸ I have read the SEA, the HRA report and the other information provided and, having considered the matter independently, I agree with

⁶ See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

⁷ 2017 (SI No. 1012).

⁸ Letter from Natural England dated 28 March 2024.

the conclusions. Therefore, I am satisfied that the ANP is compatible with EU obligations as retained in UK law.

Main Issues

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.⁹
- 4.5 Accordingly, having regard to the Alderholt Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the ANP 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

- 4.6 The vision and objectives for the ANP are based on key issues raised by local people during the initial stages of the consultation process. The vision is described in paragraph 1.5 on page 11 of the Plan. The vision is then used to develop a series of objectives grouped into seven themes which are then listed in the same paragraph and which set the context for the 19 subsequent land use policies.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDANCE

Policy 1. Settlement pattern, layout and densities

Policy 2. People friendly streets and paths

Policy 3. Parking Provision

Policy 4. Respecting local character in the design

Policy 5. Environmental performance and sustainability

Policy 6. Landscaping

- 4.7 Policies 1, 4, 5 and 6 consider different elements of the means to achieve well designed places, which is a commendably strong theme throughout

⁹ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

the Plan. Each of the above policies has regard to national guidance¹⁰ and generally conforms with Policies LN2 and HE2 of the CEDLP. However, to effectively implement the policies, especially in relation to Policies 1 and 4 where reference is made to specific Character Areas, the Area to which a particular policy will apply should be delineated with sufficient clarity to facilitate efficient development management. I consider Map 3 Alderholt Character Areas has shortcomings in this regard. I shall recommend that Map 3 should be redrawn so that the clarity is improved in order to minimise any ambiguity. **(PM1)** The policies and their implementation would then meet the Basic Condition.

- 4.8 Policy 2 aims to enable the provision of people friendly streets and paths. The policy has regard to national guidance¹¹ and generally conforms with Policies KS2 and KS11 of the CEDLP. Policy 3 considers parking provision in new development. The policy also has regard to national guidance¹² and generally conforms with Policy K12 of the CEDLP. Policies 2 and 3 each meet the Basic Conditions.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Policy 7. Meeting Local Needs - Housing

- 4.9 Policy 7 considers affordable housing; open market housing; accessible housing and the Habitats Regulations requirements. The Plan states an Indicative Housing Target of 192 dwellings for the plan period (2022 – 2034) meaning that opportunities for a further 50 dwellings should be identified. Appendix 2 of the Plan includes a Table at paragraph A1.23 showing the potential number of dwellings in the four extant permissions for housing at 2022 and I questioned whether those numbers are still correct.¹³
- 4.10 The answers from APC and DC showed a difference in estimates for the number of dwellings permitted on sites which have not been fully completed as 134 – 138 (APC) and 134 (DC). The difference can be attributed to the lapsed planning permission at 58 Ringwood Road for 4 dwellings. Therefore, assuming a potential housing supply of 134 dwellings and assuming the provision of 50 - 55 dwellings in the allocations in the Plan (Policy 12 = 20 dwellings; Policy 13 = 15 dwellings; Policy 14 = 15 - 20 dwellings), there would be a shortfall of about 3 - 8 dwellings.
- 4.11 Given that the Plan supports infill development, DC commented that windfall sites would make up the difference in the plan period and I agree, especially in view of the potential for infill sites shown on the Map of the “High Street” submitted in answer to my Q8 and which is only part of the

¹⁰ NPPF: paragraphs 128, 131, 135, 136 and 139.

¹¹ NPPF: paragraphs 108 – 110.

¹² NPPF: paragraphs 104 & 111.

¹³ Letter to APC and DC dated 16 July 2024: Q3a.

village.¹⁴ I shall recommend modifying Policy 7 to include a reference to a windfall allowance and, subject to that modification, I consider that Policy 7 would have regard to NPPF paragraph 29¹⁵ and other national guidance, would generally conform with Policies KS2, LN1 and LN3 of the CEDLP and would meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM2)**

Policy 8. The Village “High Street”

- 4.12 Policy 8 aims to create a “High Street” by defining most of Daggons Road and Station Road (B3078) extending through the northern edge of the village as an area or, more accurately, a frontage, along which Class E and sui generis uses appropriate to a local centre would be encouraged subject to compatibility with adjoining users.
- 4.13 I questioned whether this linear approach to a putative village centre was excessive, bearing in mind the apparent commercial focus at the junction of Station Road/Daggons Road with the Ringwood Road and the predominantly residential character of the remainder of the “High Street”. However, the Map and schedule of possible opportunities submitted in response by APC persuaded me that the ambitions of the local community to establish the centre in that form should not be thwarted, despite the trend towards retail businesses in villages failing rather than expanding. Therefore, I shall accept the first element of the policy.
- 4.14 Nevertheless, the second element of the policy causes me concern, also reflected in the representations from DC. The policy requires the design of new development on the High Street frontage to be such so that, should buildings be first used residentially, they should be able to convert to non-residential uses; and to ensure that there is an active frontage which enlivens the street scene. This seems to me to be wholly unreasonable and unrealistic. If a new infill or redeveloped building is designed as a dwelling, I consider the planning authority would be acting unreasonably were the design to be refused on the basis that it would be unsuitable for some future theoretical retail or other commercial use. APC suggested limiting the application of this part of the policy to sites of 0.2ha or more, but that does not overcome my strong reservations. Therefore, I shall recommend the deletion of the second paragraph of the policy. **(PM3)** Policy 8 would then have regard to national guidance¹⁶, would generally conform with Policies KS2, KS3 and PC4 of the CEDLP and would meet the Basic Conditions.

¹⁴ See response from APC and DC, 29 July 2024:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/d/guest/examiner-questions-alderholt-ndp-160724-apc-and-dc-combined-response-240729-redacted>

¹⁵ NPPF: paragraph 29 (“...Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”) and paragraphs 60, 63, 65, 66 and 82 – 84.

¹⁶ NPPF: paragraph 88,

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, 3 Princes Street, Bath BA1 1HL

Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 10100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84

Policy 9. The Trailway

- 4.15 Policy 9 seeks to protect the dismantled railway corridor (Map 11) and supports the provision of a recreational trail east of Daggons Road. The policy has regard to national guidance¹⁷, generally conforms with Policy KS11 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 10. Meeting Local Needs – Employment

- 4.16 Policy 10 supports the development of employment opportunities subject to meeting four criteria which are listed in the policy. The policy has regard to national guidance¹⁸, generally conforms with Policy PC4 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 11. Revised Village Envelope

- 4.17 Policy 11 defines the village envelope on Map 10, where it is shown updated to reflect the proposed allocations and the sites with extant planning permission, and includes a minor change either side of Daggons Road on the western end of the village to include those plots directly opposite and adjoining Policy 13. Representations were submitted to extend the village envelope further up Blackwater Grove to include land at Blackwater House.¹⁹ However, in concluding that Policy 7 would meet the Basic Conditions subject to a recommended modification, I am satisfied that the proposed allocations have been selected through a robust, proportionate and appropriate process which, together with the windfall allowance, address the identified need.
- 4.18 Therefore, notwithstanding the possible merits of extending the village envelope further here, I do not agree with it. In addition, I do not agree with the representations seeking (i) an additional allocation for housing on land which was described in the submissions as Alderholt Meadows²⁰; (ii) additional allocations for housing on land at “Pugs” off Daggons Road and on land at “Crossroads” Blackwater Grove²¹; and (iii) an allocation for housing on land at Cross Farm, Station Road²². Neither do I agree with increasing the density of housing development in the Site Allocation on Land South of Blackwater Grove (Policy 14)²³, and in the Site Allocation on the Paddock South of Daggons Road (Policy 13)²⁴.

¹⁷ NPPF: paragraph 110.

¹⁸ NPPF: paragraph 88.

¹⁹ Regulation 16 representation on behalf of Mr & Mrs Stevens dated 17 June 2024.

²⁰ Regulation 16 representation on behalf of Dudsbury Homes dated 14 June 2024.

²¹ Regulation 16 representation from Mr N J Thorne dated 20 June 2024.

²² Regulation 16 representation from Mr M Hawthorne dated 25 June 2024.

²³ Regulation 16 representation on behalf of Commercial Freeholds Limited dated 25 June 2024.

²⁴ Regulation 16 representation on behalf of Macra Limited dated 25 June 2024.

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, 3 Princes Street, Bath BA1 1HL

Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 10100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84

4.19 Accordingly, I consider that Policy 11 has regard to national guidance²⁵, generally conforms with Policy KS2 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 12. Alderholt Nursery, East of Ringwood Road

Policy 13. Paddock South of Daggons Road

Policy 14. Land South of Blackwater Grove

4.20 Policies 12, 13 and 14 allocate land for housing and which I consider have regard to national guidance²⁶, generally conform with Policy KS2 of the CEDLP and meet the Basic Conditions. As referred to above, two representations sought an increase in housing density in two of the allocations, but the allocations meet the Basic Conditions and so any variation to the layout within the allocations to add more dwellings is a matter for development management.

SAFEGUARDED AREAS AND FEATURES

Policy 15. Safeguarding Local Facilities

4.21 Policy 15 aims to avoid the loss of retail premises, leisure and other local facilities. Map 12 shows the local facilities as existed in 2023. The policy has regard to national guidance²⁷, generally conforms with Policies LN7 and PC5 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 16. Important Local Green Spaces

4.22 Policy 16 designates 12 Local Green Spaces (LGS) identified on Map 13 and listed in the policy. 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.²⁸

LGS should also be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.²⁹

4.23 I visited each LGS on my inspection of the area and found the response from APC to my question of clarification Q5a very useful. With one exception, I agree that each LGS meets the designation criteria. The exception is LGS10 Blackwater Grove Field which, although attractive countryside on the edge of the village and adjoining a popular public right

²⁵ NPPF: paragraphs 60 & 83.

²⁶ NPPF: paragraphs 60 & 83.

²⁷ NPPF: paragraph 88.

²⁸ NPPF: paragraph 106.

²⁹ NPPF: paragraph 105.

of way, I consider it not so special that it justifies the LGS designation. Therefore, I shall recommend its deletion from the list. **(PM4)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance as referenced above, generally conform with Policy HE4 of the CEDLP and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy 17. Key Landscape Features

4.24 Policy 17 seeks to protect key landscape features and has regard to national guidance³⁰, generally conforms with Policy HE3 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 18. Important Views

4.25 Table 2 and Map 14 identify important views which, under Policy 18, should be respected when proposals for development are considered. I visited Viewpoints V1, V3 and V4 on my inspection and walked along the rights of way leading towards the summit of V2 until I had no doubt about the accuracy of its description in Table 2 and the high quality of the view. Accordingly, I consider that the policy has regard to national guidance³¹, generally conforms with Policy HE3 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 19. Non-designated Heritage Assets around Alderholt.

4.26 Policy 19 aims to safeguard non-designated heritage assets identified in paragraphs 5.5.4 – 5.5.7 and Appendix 4 of the Plan. The policy has regard to national guidance³², generally conforms with Policy HE1 of the CEDLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

National Landscapes

4.27 In addition, the use of the term 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) has been replaced (November 2023) with the term 'National Landscape'³³ (albeit the relevant statutory provisions continue to refer to AONBs). Therefore, I recommend that all references to Area(s) of Outstanding Natural Beauty, such as in paragraph 1.3.5 of the Plan, are replaced by the term National Landscape(s). **(PM5)**

Overview

4.28 Therefore, on the evidence before me, with the recommended modifications, I consider that the policies within the ANP are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the CEDLP, have regard to

³⁰ NPPF: paragraphs 180 & 191

³¹ NPPF: paragraph 180.

³² NPPF: paragraphs 195 & 209.

³³ See, for example: <https://cranbornechase.org.uk/about-us/the-aonb/>

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, 3 Princes Street, Bath BA1 1HL

Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 10100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84

national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

- 4.29 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; text improvements suggested helpfully by DC in their Regulation 16 consultation response; and any other similar minor or consequential changes (such as paragraph numbering) in agreement with DC. 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.³⁴

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Alderholt 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 ANP, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify 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 or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The ANP, as modified, has no policy or proposal 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.

Concluding Comments

- 5.4 The APC, the Neighbourhood Plan Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for their efforts in producing a very comprehensive Plan. The Plan is logical, informative and well-illustrated. I enjoyed examining it, visiting the area and appreciating the countryside setting of

³⁴ PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

the village. The Consultation Statement and the Basic Conditions Report were extremely useful. The Plan also benefitted from the comprehensive and constructive Regulation 16 comments from DC and others, and the helpful responses from APC and DC to my questions.

- 5.5 Subject to the commendably small number of recommended modifications, the ANP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and should enable the attractive character and appearance of Alderholt 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 1 Map 3	Improve the clarity of Map 3 by redrawing it with a clear ordnance base so that the boundaries of the Character Areas can be precisely distinguished.
PM2	Policy 7	Amend the second sentence to: "Given this identified supply, including a windfall allowance, exceeds the housing need requirement, ..." .
PM3	Policy 8	Delete the second paragraph.
PM4	Policy 16 Map 13 Appendix 3	Delete LGS 10 Blackwater Grove field.
PM5	Throughout the document	Replace all references to Area(s) of Outstanding Natural Beauty with "National Landscape(s)" .