

Ranskill Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021 - 2038

**A report to Bassetlaw District Council on the
Ranskill Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
BA (Hons) MA, DMS, MRTPI**

Director – Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited

Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Bassetlaw District Council in July 2022 to carry out the independent examination of the Ranskill Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood plan area on 28 July 2022.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on designating local green spaces and safeguarding its distinctive character.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
1 November 2022

1 Introduction

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

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by BDC, with the consent of RPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both the BDC and RPC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have over 35 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

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

Other examination matters

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

3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Ranskill Design Guide
- the SEA/HRA Screening Statement
- the representations made to the Plan.
- the RPC's responses to the Clarification Note.
- the adopted Bassetlaw Core Strategy 2011.
- the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021).
- Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates).
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 28 July 2022. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. My visit is covered in more detail in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.11 of this report.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted Plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations and that a hearing was not required.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 RPC has prepared a Consultation Statement. The Statement is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the policies in the Plan.
- 4.3 The Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. It also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (December 2021 to January 2022).
- 4.4 The Statement sets out details of the comprehensive range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the early stages of the Plan. They were affected by the Covid outbreak. It is to the credit of RPC that it continued with the preparation of the Plan through this challenging period.
- 4.5 The details in the Statement set out the nature of the community questionnaire, other consultation exercises and the responses received. They demonstrate the way in which those responsible for the preparation of the Plan sought to address the expectations of the wider community. A significant part the Statement sets out how the submitted Plan took account of consultation feedback at the pre-submission phase. It does so in a proportionate and effective way.

Consultation Responses

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted Plan was undertaken by BDC. It ended on 15 July 2022. This exercise generated representations from the following persons and organisations:
 - Bassetlaw District Council;
 - Canal and River Trust;
 - The Coal Authority;
 - Environment Agency
 - National Highways
 - Historic England;
 - National Grid;
 - Natural England;
 - Nottinghamshire County Council Highways;
 - Severn Trent Water;
 - Sport England; and
 - Leicestershire County Council Archaeology.

- 4.7 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so I refer to specific representations on a policy-by-policy basis.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Ranskill. It is located approximately five miles to the north of Retford. Its population in 2011 was 1362 persons living in 610 households. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 21 March 2016.
- 5.2 Ranskill is the principal settlement in the parish. It is located at the junction of the A638 (the former Great North Road) and the B6045. It includes a series of properties of different ages. The East Coast main railway line runs to the immediate east of the village and forms its eastern boundary.
- 5.3 The remainder of the neighbourhood area is mainly in agricultural use. There is an area of woodland to the east of the railway line and to the immediate south of Mattersey Road (B6045).

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan covering the neighbourhood plan area is the Bassetlaw District Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2010 - 2028 ('the Core Strategy'). The Core Strategy sets out a vision, objectives, a spatial strategy and overarching planning policies that guide new development in the Plan period.
- 5.5 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy provides a focus for new development based around the existing principal settlements in the District. Ranskill is identified as a Rural Service Centre where there will be limited rural growth in the Plan period.
- 5.6 Policy CS8 sets out specific development opportunities and requirements for the various Rural Service Centres. In summary these include:

Housing Development - Up to 10% (599 houses) of the District's housing requirement will be delivered in the Rural Service Centres through existing permissions and allocations in the Site Allocations DPD, for the plan period 2010-2028. Residential development proposals will be supported within the Development Boundary, in line with other material considerations and planning policy requirements. All housing development resulting in a net gain of one or more units will be required to contribute towards the achievement of affordable housing targets. In the case of Ranskill this figure is 25%. This will be either through on-site provision (where appropriate) or through a financial contribution to the delivery or improvement of affordable housing elsewhere within the rural areas of Bassetlaw.

Employment Development - Proposals that deliver rural employment opportunities, of a scale and type appropriate to the settlement and surrounding land uses, will be supported in line with other material considerations and planning policy requirements. Economic development proposals will be supported within Development Boundaries, in line with other material considerations and planning policy requirements.

Community Facilities - Proposals for the provision of rural community services and facilities will be supported where they are of a scale appropriate to, and accord with the role of, the village. Where no available sites exist within Development Boundaries, proposals for standalone community services and facilities will be supported on sites outside of, but adjoining, these Boundaries where need and long-term viability is proven and where there is explicit community support for the proposal.

- 5.7 The submitted Plan has been prepared within its wider adopted development plan context. In doing so it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents in the District. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter. It is clear that the submitted Plan seeks to add value to the Core Strategy and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.
- 5.8 BDC is now well-advanced on the production of a new Local Plan. It submitted the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038: Publication Version, Publication Version Addendum and Publication Version Second Addendum to the Secretary of State for independent examination in July 2022. Once adopted it will replace the Core Strategy. Ranskill is identified as one of a series of smaller rural centres in the emerging Local Plan. I make further reference to the emerging Local Plan in the section on Monitoring and Review of the Plan later in this report.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 28 July 2022. I approached from Blyth and the A1 to the west. This helped me to understand the neighbourhood area in its wider landscape context and its relation to the main road network.
- 5.10 I looked initially at the historic core of the village. I saw the way in which a range of buildings were arranged around the junction of the two main roads. I saw the village green.
- 5.11 I took time to look at the proposed Local Green Spaces and the Significant Green Gaps. I walked to the end of Station Road up to the railway line.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented, informative, and professional document.
- 6.2 As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
 - be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (7).

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

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in July 2021.
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of core land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Ranskill Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the adopted Bassetlaw Core Strategy;
 - delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic

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

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies that address a range of environmental matters. The Basic Conditions Statement maps the policies in the Plan against the appropriate sections of the NPPF.
- 6.8 At a more practical level, the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Paragraph ID:41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. The majority of the recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes policies on infill development (Policy 1) and on employment development (Policy 6). In the social dimension, it includes policies on community facilities (Policy 7) and on local green spaces (Policy 3). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It includes specific policies on biodiversity (Policy 2) and design (Policy 4). This assessment overlaps with the Parish Council's comments on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the wider Bassetlaw District in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted Core Strategy. The Basic

Conditions Statement helpfully relates the Plan's policies to policies in the Core Strategy. Subject to the recommended modifications in this report I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, BDC undertook a screening exercise in May 2022 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that it is unlikely that significant environmental effects will arise from the implementation of the Plan and that SEA is not needed.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 BDC also prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. It assesses the likely impact of the submitted Plan on protected sites.
- 6.16 The Assessment comments that no significant effects are likely to occur with regards to the integrity of the Hatfield Moor SAC, Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA or the Sherwood Forest potential SPA as a consequence of the implementation of the Plan. As such, it concludes that the Plan does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.
- 6.17 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns with regard to either neighbourhood plan or to European obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.

Human Rights

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

Summary

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

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. In particular, it makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the Plan area. The wider community and RPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land. It also includes non-land use Community Projects in Appendix A.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial sections of the Plan (Sections 1-8)

- 7.8 The Plan is well-organised and includes effective maps, tables and photographs. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. Its design will ensure that it will comfortably be able to take its place as part of the development plan in the event that it is eventually 'made'. The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies.
- 7.9 Section 1 and 2 comment about the background to neighbourhood planning. They also helpfully describe the local planning context within which the Plan has been prepared. The sections include a map showing the designated neighbourhood area and describes the Plan period.
- 7.10 Section 3 comments about the consultation process which was undertaken on the Plan. It overlaps with the submitted Consultation Statement.
- 7.11 Section 4 comments about the status of the projects and actions in Appendix A.
- 7.12 Section 5 comments about the special and distinctive features of the neighbourhood area. It is a particularly successful part of the Plan. It provides detailed information about its location, its people, its history, its built environment, and its business base.

- 7.13 Sections 6 and 7 set out the Plan's Community Vision and the supporting Community Objectives respectively. They are both well-developed and distinctive to the neighbourhood area. The Vision is identified as follows:

'In 2038 Ranskill will still be a small rural village. The built heritage will be protected with easy access to the countryside via a network of footpaths.

All development (which will include an additional employment site) will be designed to a high quality and carefully located, to minimise its impact on the surrounding landscape, and to be close to supporting infrastructure.

The sense of community spirit and cohesion will be fostered and strengthened, supported by the protection of existing community facilities.'

- 7.14 Section 8 comments about the importance of developers engaging with the community as they seek to bring forward proposals. It establishes a 'Key Principle on this matter.
- 7.15 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

Policy 1: Sustainable Development, Infill, and the Development Boundary

- 7.16 This policy sets the scene for the wider plan. It proposes a new Development Boundary (DB) that includes sites that have secured planning permission since 2011. The DB directs development within the settlement and protects areas of valued landscape and open countryside around the village (as shown on Map 4). The policy comments that infill development within the DB will be supported where it complies with a series of criteria. Outside the DB proposals will be limited to development that is necessary to support the rural economy or is a rural exception site in accordance with national, District and other relevant policies in the submitted Plan.
- 7.17 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. The proposed DB has been carefully drawn. It following the principles set out in Table 2 of the Plan. In addition, the spatial approach taken will inherently concentrate new development in a sustainable location and would protect the countryside.
- 7.18 I recommend a series of modifications to the first part of the policy so that it would have the clarity required by the NPPF and so that they would be capable of being applied consistently through the development management process as follows:
- taking a consistent approach throughout the policy to the use of development proposals in the plural;
 - refining the opening element of the policy;
 - deleting the first criteria given that there is no need for a neighbourhood plan policy to refer to other development plan policies (and as reinforced at the lower edge of each page in the submitted Plan itself);
 - refining the approach in criterion b on the yield of potential infill site to one which requires proposals more generally to respond positively to the character and nature of the site itself. Nevertheless, I recommend that the 1 or 2 number as

initially submitted in the policy is repositioned into the supporting text as an indication of likely yield given the nature of the land within the DB; and

- refining criteria g) and h) so that they can be applied in a proportionate way.

7.19 Ranskill is fortunate in having a well-defined DB. It is shown on Map 4. However, that Map does not have the clarity necessary for a DP policy in general, and given its strategic importance in the Plan in particular. It has the approach of a diagrammatic plan. As such I recommend that a replacement plan is prepared at a scale and with the clarity to shows the precise alignment of the DB.

7.20 I am satisfied that the second part of the policy meets the basic conditions.

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

‘Proposals for new residential development will be supported where they fill a gap within the existing Development Boundary as defined on Map 4 and where they meet the following criteria:’

In the criteria replace the initial ‘it’ with ‘they’ and then change the grammar of the following verbs accordingly.

Delete criterion a).

Replace criterion b) with: ‘the number of dwellings and their layout responds positively to the immediate character of the locality; and’

Replace criterion c) with: ‘they positively respond to the character, appearance and amenity of that part of Ranskill Village in which the proposal is located; and’

Replace criterion g) with: ‘as appropriate to its scale, nature and location the proposal incorporates measures which would promote walking and cycling into the design and layout of the proposed development; and’

Replace criterion h) with: ‘as appropriate to its scale, nature and location the proposal includes Sustainable Drainage Systems that improve biodiversity as well as mitigating surface water flood risk (where applicable) where outfall is a key design consideration.’

Replace paragraph 43 with: ‘This Neighbourhood Plan defines limited infill as the completion of an otherwise substantially built-up frontage by the filling of a small gap. Given the nature and character of the villages within the defined Development Boundary. infill developments will usually generate one or two dwellings.’

Replace Map 4 with one prepared at a scale and clarity which shows the precise alignment of the DB.

Policy 2: Protecting Biodiversity and the Landscape Character

- 7.21 This is a wide-ranging policy which celebrate and safeguards the landscape of the parish. It has general elements and specific part which proposes the identification of Significant Green Gaps and the identification of key views.
- 7.22 In general terms the policy takes an appropriate approach to these matters.
- 7.23 I looked carefully at the proposed Significant Green Gaps and the key views. Their role and purpose were self-evident. In reaching this judgement I have taken account of RPC's response on this matter to the clarification note.
- 7.24 I recommend a series of modifications to the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. In general terms the modifications propose appropriate policy wording and remove unnecessary explanatory text from the policy wording. In specific terms, the recommended modifications also address the following matters:
- ensuring that the first part of the policy sets out requirements for developers rather than commenting about a process to demonstrate certain matters;
 - ensuring that the third part of the policy on key views is more explicit about the requirements for developers and the implications for development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on a key view;
 - combining the third and fourth parts of the policy to provide clarity to the development industry;
 - reordering the elements in the fifth part of the policy to ensure a more logical structure to the policy;
 - the deletion of the sixth part of the policy and its repositioning into the supporting text;
 - a refinement to the seventh part of the policy on drainage so that it can be applied on a proportionate basis to the site concerned.
- 7.25 I also recommend consequential modifications to the supporting text.

In the first part of the policy:

Replace the opening section with: 'Development proposals should:'

In criterion a replace 'it protects' with 'protect'

In criterion b replace 'it protects' with 'protect'

In criterion c replace 'it is sympathetic' with 'be sympathetic'

Replace criterion d) with: 'not represent an unacceptable visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape in general, and the Significant Green Gaps (shown on Map 10) in particular.'

In the second part of the policy replace 'to minimise the impact of development on the landscape character' with 'and minimise its impact on the landscape character.'

Replace the third and fourth parts of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should be designed to respond positively to the key views as shown on Map 9. Development proposals that would affect the key views including the sense of openness and/or the sense of place should include a detailed assessment of their effects the proposals will have on the relevant character area as identified in the Ranskill Design Guide 2020 and any proposed mitigation measures. Any proposed mitigation planting and boundary treatment should include native species recommended for the Idle Lowlands Landscape Character Area. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on an identified key view as defined on Map 9 will not be supported.’

Replace the fifth part of the policy with:

‘Development should achieve a net biodiversity gain that is measurable in accordance with local and national planning policy. Development proposals which would have significant ecological impacts will not be supported unless appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures are incorporated in the overall development package. Any such measures should be targeted to benefit local conservation priorities as identified in the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan. With the exception of householder development, proposals that would result in the net loss of biodiversity will not be supported.’

Delete the sixth part of the policy.

Replace the seventh part of the policy with: **‘As appropriate to their scale nature and location, development proposals should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems which are designed to address the particular circumstances of the site concerned.’**

At the end of paragraph 69 add: ‘The third part of the policy comments about the potential way in which the effects of development proposals could be mitigated. [At this point include the sixth part of the policy in the submitted Plan]’

Policy 3 Designation of Local Green Spaces

- 7.26 This policy proposes the designation of a series of local green spaces (LGSs). They are shown on Map 11. The proposed LGSs reflect the character and the nature of the village. In the main they are formal and informal green spaces within the wider built environment of the village.
- 7.27 The supporting text comments about the tests in the NPPF for the designation of LGSs. It provides a detailed assessment of the way in which RPC considers that the various proposed LGSs meet the criteria for such designation in the NPPF. I looked carefully at the proposed LGSs when I visited the neighbourhood area.
- 7.28 On the basis of all the information available to me, including my own observations, I am satisfied that the proposed LGS comfortably comply with the three tests in the paragraph 102 of the NPPF. In several cases, they are precisely the types of green

spaces which the authors of the NPPF would have had in mind in preparing national policy.

- 7.29 In coming to this judgement I noticed the existing building within proposed LGS 4 (the Bowls Club). In the context of the wider proposal for its designation as a LGS and the connection between the bowling green and the club house, I am satisfied that the approach taken is entirely appropriate.
- 7.30 In addition, I am satisfied that the proposed designation of the various LGSs would accord with the more general elements of paragraph 101 of the NPPF. Firstly, I am satisfied that their designation is consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. They do not otherwise prevent sustainable development coming forward in the neighbourhood area and no such development has been promoted or suggested. Secondly, I am satisfied that the LGSs are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period. Indeed, they are an established element of the local environment and, in most cases, have existed in their current format for many years. In addition, no evidence was brought forward during the examination that would suggest that the proposed local green spaces would not endure beyond the end of the Plan period.
- 7.31 The policy itself has three related parts. The first lists the proposed LGSs. The second sets out the implications for LGS designation. The third part offers support to proposals which seek to improve public access and recreational use. The second and third parts of the policy seeks to follow the approach as set out in paragraph 103 of the NPPF. However, they go beyond that approach in general terms and in commenting about the way in which the LGSs contribute to the special character of the parish and the general support for proposals which seek to improve public access and recreational use.
- 7.32 Given the number and diversity of proposed LGSs I can understand the circumstances which have caused RPC to design the policy in this way. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification so that the policy takes the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. I also recommend that the policy lists the LGSs rather than encourage the reader to identify them on a related map base.
- 7.33 In the event that development proposals affecting designated LGSs come forward within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by BDC. In particular, BDC will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the 'very special circumstances' required by the policy. I recommend that the supporting text clarifies this matter.

Replace the policy with:

The Plan designates the following green spaces (as shown on Map 11) as Local Green Spaces.'

[At this point list the LGS numbers and site titles]

Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances'

At the end of paragraph 73 add: 'Policy 3 follows the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green spaces within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the District Council. In particular it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the 'very special circumstances' required by the policy'

Policy 4 Ensuring High Quality Design

- 7.34 This is another comprehensive policy. At its heart is that development proposals should demonstrate a high design quality that will contribute to the character of the village. In order to achieve this, new development proposals should reinforce the character of the area as defined in the Ranskill Design Guide 2020
- 7.35 The policy also includes elements on:
- landscape and boundary treatments;
 - building materials;
 - low carbon technologies; and
 - the retrofitting of modern technologies in heritage assets.
- 7.36 In general terms, the policy is a first-class local response to the national design agenda in Section 12 of the NPPF. In this context the policy is commendably underpinned by the Ranskill Design Guide 2020.
- 7.37 I recommend a series of modifications to elements of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. They will ensure that it can be applied consistently through the development management process. In most cases they do not alter the direction or purpose of the element of the policy concerned. They help to define the land use nature of the policy and the specific requirements for developers.

Replace the second part of the policy with:

'Development proposals should give particular attention to landscaping schemes and boundary treatment (using native trees, hedgerows, low walls to the front and planting) that reflect the surrounding character and ensure that they have an intimate character and reinforce the rural street scene.'

Replace the third part of the policy with:

'The materials, scale and massing of development proposals should reinforce the existing character areas as defined in the Ranskill Design Guide 2020.'

In the fifth part of the policy replace 'Proposals should demonstrate how:' with 'Development proposals should be designed to ensure that'

Replace the seventh part of the policy with:

‘Proposals for the retrofit of heritage properties/assets to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy will be supported where they safeguard the significance and setting of the heritage assets affected.’

Policy 5 A Mix of Housing Types

- 7.38 This policy comments that proposals for new housing development should deliver housing sizes and types that directly reflect housing needs identified in the most up to date housing need assessment and particularly for smaller dwellings suitable for older people, first time buyers and those with mobility issues. It also recognises the importance of self-build homes in meeting housing needs.
- 7.39 The policy is underpinned by detailed and comprehensive supporting text based on the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) 2020.
- 7.40 I recommend modifications to the policy so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF. In the first part I recommend that a distinction is made between the general housing needs and those which might apply specifically to older people, first time buyers and those with mobility issues in particular. I recommend that the second part of the policy is modified so that it reads as a land use policy rather than a general statement about the benefits of self-build housing. In doing so, I recommend that the policy should directly relate to Policy 1 of the Plan. Otherwise, the approach may generate unintended consequences for new development in the countryside.

Replace the policy with:

‘Proposals for new housing development should deliver housing sizes and types that directly reflect housing needs identified in the most up-to-date housing need assessment in general and the need for smaller dwellings which would be suitable for older people, first time buyers and those with mobility issues in particular.’

Proposals for self-build homes will be supported where they otherwise comply with Policy 1 of this Plan.’

Policy 6 Maintaining Local Employment

- 7.41 This policy comments that development proposals that enable the sustainable growth of businesses both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings for commercial uses will be supported provided that they meet a series of criteria.
- 7.42 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter. It has regard to Section 6 of the NPPF. In this context it meets the basic conditions.

Policy 7 Enhancing the provision of community facilities

- 7.43 This policy comments that proposals to provide new or improved community facilities within or adjoining the DB will be supported where the design and location of the

community facilities enables direct, safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, and the mobility impaired and the facility is well-designed. Based on the community consultation process the policy identifies support for specific community facilities (a village hall, doctors' surgery, village shop).

- 7.44 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter. I recommend a detailed modification to the second criterion to bring absolute clarity to the policy. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. It will do much to contribute to the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development in the parish.

In criterion b) add 'the building concerned' before is well designed'

Other Matters – General

- 7.45 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly as a result of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan as a result of the recommended modifications to the policies. It will be appropriate for BDC and RPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies.

Implementation and Review

- 7.46 Section 16 of the Plan properly comments about the need for monitoring of any made neighbourhood plan. It also recognises that a review of the Plan may be required at some point within the Plan period. The submitted Plan has been prepared within the context of a development plan context that pre-dates the introduction of the current version of the NPPF. As described elsewhere in this report, BDC is now working towards the preparation of a new Local Plan. It is anticipated that the emerging Local Plan will be adopted in 2023. This process will be an important milestone in the development of planning policy in the District.
- 7.47 The submitted Plan describes the way in which it has recently been revised to take account of changes in the way in which BDC is anticipating that future housing delivery will come forward within the wider context of the emerging Plan. This is best practice and has regard to guidance on this matter in Planning Practice Guidance (41-009-20190509).
- 7.48 Nevertheless I recommend that the Plan includes some commentary about the relationship between the emerging Local Plan and any made neighbourhood plan at that time. Plainly RPC will need to consider the potential impact at that time and reach its own view on the need or otherwise for a review of the Plan.

At the end of paragraph 125 add: 'In addition, the eventual adoption of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038 will be a key milestone in the formulation of the development plan for the District. In this context, the Parish Council will consider the need for a

review of the neighbourhood plan at that point. This task will be undertaken based on an assessment of developments that have taken place at that time in the neighbourhood area, the objectively-assessed housing requirement incorporated in the Local Plan and the way in which the adopted Plan proposes that the requirement is apportioned across the District.'

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

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

Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report I recommend to Bassetlaw District Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Ranskill Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by Bassetlaw District Council on 21 March 2016.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
1 November 2022