

Chobham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2038

A report to Surrey Heath Borough Council on the Chobham Neighbourhood Development Plan

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

Director – Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited

Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Surrey Heath Borough Council in July 2025 to carry out the independent examination of the Chobham Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination proceeded by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 23 September 2025.
- 3 The Plan seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It also includes policies to safeguard the built and historic environment and proposes the designation of a package of local green spaces. The Plan is commendably focused on a clear set of locally-distinctive issues.
- 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 Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum area should coincide with the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
18 November 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Chobham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2038 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Surrey Heath Borough Council (SHBC) by Chobham Parish Council (CPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether 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 because 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 and 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 existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance. It proposes the designation of a package of local green spaces.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the 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 SHBC, with the consent of CPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SHBC and CPC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. I have 42 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level, and more recently as an independent examiner. I 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 should proceed to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in 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 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met.

3 Procedural Matters

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

- the submitted Plan and Appendices A and B.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Chobham Housing Report.
- the SHBC Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment screening report.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- CPC's responses to the clarification note.
- SHBC's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.
- the saved policies of the Surrey Heath Local Plan 2000.
- the submitted Surrey Heath Local Plan 2019-2038
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 23 September 2025. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

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, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by 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 management 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 (as amended), CPC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is a very good example of a document of this nature. It is underpinned by a package of appendices.
- 4.3 Section 2 of the Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. It is helpfully organised into three stages. Table 1 sets out a high-level schedule of events and activities. The Statement also advises about the way in which CPC engaged with the owners of the proposed Local Green Spaces.
- 4.4 Stage II of the Plan preparation process comments on the extensive consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (May to June 2024).
- 4.5 Appendix B outlines the comments received on the pre-submission Plan and advises about the way in which CPC refined the Plan because of the comments received at this stage. This analysis helps to describe how the Plan evolved and progressed to the submission stage.
- 4.6 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I conclude that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. SHBC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.7 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by SHBC and ended on 5 September 2025. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
 - ADP Fair Oaks and Vistry Group
 - Chobham Poor Allotments Society
 - Kingsbury Investment and Development Group
 - National Grid
 - National Highways
 - Network Rail

- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Windlesham Parish Council
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Peter Fitzsimons
- Ryan Coomer

4.8 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 Chobham parish which is in the eastern part of Surrey Heath Borough. The main settlement is Chobham. Mimbridge and Castle Green are smaller settlements in the south of the parish. The neighbourhood area was designated on 12 November 2013. In 2021 its population was 4,120 people.
- 5.2 As the Plan describes, the Chobham Village Conservation Area encompasses the centre of the village and adjoining areas, including residential properties and open greenspaces beyond the village's settlement boundary. Chobham High Street is characterised by a largely intact series of historic buildings interspersed with views of the surrounding rural area. It offers an attractive and vibrant range of community and commercial services.
- 5.3 The neighbourhood area is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Its open landscape maintains a clear separation from adjacent urban areas to the north (Sunningdale /Virginia Water) and to the south (Woking). Chobham Common, is a large heathland of historic and scientific importance in the north of the parish. It is a Special Area of Conservation, a Special Protection Area, and a Site of Special Conservation Importance National Nature Reserve that also forms part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (Core Strategy) was adopted in February 2012. It covers the period up to 2028. It sets out policies for the use and development of land across the Borough. Core Policy 1 sets out a spatial strategy for the Borough. It includes the following elements which are relevant to the neighbourhood area:
 - new development will be directed in accordance with the spatial strategy which provides the most sustainable approach to accommodating growth making the best use of infrastructure and services whilst respecting the character of the Borough;
 - new development will come forward largely through redevelopment of previously developed land in the western part of the Borough;
 - the settlement of Chobham is “washed over” by Green Belt (as shown on the Proposals Map). This village has limited capacity to accommodate any new development; and
 - within the countryside the current extent of the Green Belt (as shown on the Proposals Map) will be maintained. Any change to the boundaries of the Major Developed Sites will be considered through the site allocations DPD. Development in the Countryside beyond the Green Belt (as shown on the Proposals Map) which results in the coalescence of settlements will not be permitted.

5.5 The following other strategic policies in the Core Strategy are relevant to the submitted Plan:

- Core Policy 2 Sustainable Development and Design
- Core Policy 5 Affordable Housing
- Core Policy 8 Employment
- Core Policy 9 Hierarchy and Role of Settlements.

5.6 Policy DM2 of the Core Strategy comments about development in Chobham. It reflects its location within the Green Belt. Paragraph 6.19 of the Core Strategy advises that SHBC considers that the rural and historic character of the village warrants its continued designation as a settlement washed over by the Green Belt. However, it recognises that to ensure Chobham remains a sustainable and vibrant settlement, support will be required for its employers, community facilities, and village centre. Further opportunities for limited development will therefore be permitted provided that such development is small in scale and respects the historic and rural village character.

5.7 The saved policies of the Surrey Heath Local Plan 2000 are also part of the development plan.

5.8 SHBC is now well advanced in the preparation of an updated Local Plan. It will cover the period up to 2038. It is now being examined. The following policies are particularly relevant to the neighbourhood area:

- Policy SS1 which identifies that new development will be directed to the defined settlement areas in the west of the Borough;
- Policy ER2 which identifies a series of Strategic Employment Sites (which include Fairoaks Airport and Chobham Business Centre, Chobham, Longcross Studios and Highams Park in the neighbourhood area; and
- Policy ER8 which identifies Chobham as a Local Centre.

5.9 The submitted neighbourhood plan has been prepared within its up-to-date development plan context. In doing so, it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

5.10 I visited the neighbourhood area on 23 September 2025. I approached it from the M25 to the east. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape and its accessibility to the road network.

5.11 I looked initially at Fairoaks Airport. I saw that it provided a home to several small businesses. I also saw its location in relation to Ottershaw, Woking and Chobham. I took the opportunity to look at Mimbridge and Castle Green.

- 5.12 I then drove to Chobham. In doing so I looked at the Chertsey Road neighbourhood shops. I saw their obvious popularity to the local community and the ready accessibility of car parking.
- 5.13 I walked north to Red Lion Road and looked at the Broom Lane allotments (LGS5) and the Red Lion Allotments (LGS6). In doing so I saw the attractive area around Chobham Common.
- 5.14 I then walked into the village centre. I saw the attractive range of retail, commercial and pub/restaurant uses.
- 5.15 Whilst I was in the village centre I looked at the various proposed local green spaces (LGSs). I saw the scale and importance of Chobham Meadows (LGS2), the Recreation Ground (LGS12) and the very attractive Cricket Ground (LGS4) adjacent both to the Church and the Village Hall.
- 5.16 I then drove to the part of the parish to the north of the M3 and Chertsey Road. I looked at the Longcross Site and the former British Oxygen Company Site. I also saw the extensive Common area to the east of Chobham Road (B383) and its associated car parks.
- 5.17 I left the neighbourhood area along the A30 and drove to Sunningdale and Bagshot. This part of the visit highlighted the way in which the various communities related one to the other.

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 in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented 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;
 - not breach, and otherwise be compatible with, the assimilated obligations of EU legislation (as consolidated in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023; and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

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 December 2024 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Chobham Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the development plan context as described in Section 5 of this report;
 - 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 subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area and includes a series of policies that address a range of development and environmental matters. It has a focus on safeguarding its built and natural environments, and designating a package of local green spaces.
- 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 is reinforced in Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-041-20140306) which 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. Planning practice guidance also advises that planning policies should be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted, the Plan does not fully accord with these practical issues. Most of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 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 the location of development (Policy CH1), Chobham village centre (Policy CH7), and workspaces/home working (Policy CH9). In the social dimension, it includes policies on meeting housing needs (Policy CH2), local green spaces (Policy CH11), and community facilities (Policy CH16). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It includes policies on character and design (Policy CH3), flooding (Policy CH5), heritage assets (Policy CH6), and views (Policy CH12). This assessment overlaps with the details 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 Surrey Heath 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 development plan. 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) (Amendment) 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 SHBC prepared a screening report in September 2023. It concludes that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the draft Plan. As such, it does not require a full SEA to be undertaken

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 SHBC also prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report of the Plan at the same time. It assesses the potential impact of the Plan on protected sites.
- 6.16 The report assesses the impact of the Plan on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC (and specifically the area known as Chobham Common). The report concludes that SHBC, as the responsible authority, is satisfied that no appropriate assessment is required.
- 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 about the way the Plan meets neighbourhood plan obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of the basic conditions.

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. The approach taken is captured in the submitted Equalities Impact Assessment. 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. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. However, 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 neighbourhood area. The wider community and CPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (Section 41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the policies.
- 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 parts of the Plan (Sections 1-3)

- 7.8 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies.
- 7.9 The Introduction sets out a clear background to the Plan. It identifies the neighbourhood area (in Figure 1) and the Plan period (in paragraph 1.1). It also comments about:
- the national neighbourhood plan agenda;
 - national planning policy;
 - local planning policy;
 - the emerging Surrey Heath Local Plan; and
 - community engagement
- 7.10 Section 2 comments about the parish to very good effect. The information helpfully underpins several of the policies.
- 7.11 Section 3 comments about the vision and seven objectives of the Plan and how they provide a structure for the resulting policies. The Vision neatly summarises the approach taken as follows:

'To achieve sustainable development within Chobham, which respects the rural nature of the Parish, its architectural heritage and environmental assets and which offers housing and community facilities for generations to come.'

- 7.12 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.

General comments on the policies

- 7.13 The policies are presented in clear policy boxes and are distinguished from their supporting text.
- 7.14 Each policy has a Purpose and a Justification. This helps all concerned to navigate their way through the Plan. For consistency I use the Purpose in the Plan to summarise each of the policies. Each policy lists its conformity references to the Plan's objectives and to the development plan (the Core Strategy) and to the emerging Local Plan. This is best practice.

Policy CH1: Location of development

- 7.15 This policy sets out the Plan's approach to the location of development. It emphasises the importance of new development being directed to the most sustainable locations, near to local services and amenities, which will help to protect the valued green spaces and corridors in the area, the Green Belt, and to avoid sprawl and coalescence between both the village and nearby settlements, notably Woking, West End, Knaphill, Windlesham, Sunningdale and Ottershaw. It will also help to maintain walkable distances between the main residential areas and the key facilities.
- 7.16 SHBC comment that the policy is unclear as to whether just one, all, or some combination of criterion must be met. It also comments that the Chobham revised Settlement Boundary, as set out in Regulation 19 Local Plan Mapping booklet (Examination Library reference CD3) is not reflected on the dotted red line on Figures 3 and 4, or the blue line on Figure 5. CPC agreed to these suggested changes, and I recommend accordingly.
- 7.17 ADP Fair Oaks/Vistry Group comments that it is vital that the Plan does not preclude development coming forward within the emerging Local Plan, and that it supports Section 2e) of the draft Policy. It also comments the need for allocations in the Plan should await further progress with the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.18 Kingsbury Investment and Development Group comment that:
- 'In the absence of any specific housing allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan, Kingsbury Investment & Development Group broadly supports the approach taken to the location of development in Policy CH1, recognising as it does, the opportunities presented by sites outside the main settlement boundary. While Kingsbury Investment & Development Group is also supportive of the way in which the Policy gives recognition to proposals within the Green Belt that meet either the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, or demonstrate very special circumstances, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

(December 2024), it is nevertheless considered that the Policy could be more explicit about the status of 'grey belt' land in the development management process.'

7.19 Peter Fitzsimon comments that:

'This policy focuses upon development within the defined settlement boundary, with limited exceptions. We support the Plan's intent to concentrate growth in the village and protect the wider countryside. We particularly welcome that the policy gives 'substantial weight... to using suitable brownfield land within the settlement boundary' (justification paragraph 4.2.4(f)) as the NPPF emphasises prioritising previously developed land (brownfield).

We suggest that CH1 explicitly incorporates the new 'Grey Belt' guidance in the NPPF. The 2024 NPPF defines Grey Belt land as Green Belt land, including previously developed land and land that does not strongly serve Green Belt purposes and requires plans to treat it as a second priority for development after other brownfield land.'

7.20 I note that part 2a of the policy comments about the Green Belt and that several representations comment about the reference to grey belt land in the NPPF. In this context I sought advice from CPC about the extent that it had considered the matter and the potential to identify grey belt land as part of the preparation of the Plan. I also sought advice on the extent to which part 2e of the policy was intended to provide longer-term flexibility on this matter. In its response to the clarification note, CPC advised that:

'(the Plan) does not allocate sites for development. It also did not undertake a review of the Green Belt, as there is no current strategic policy in the adopted Plan enabling them to remove areas from the Green Belt, for instance for development, as required by paragraph 145 of the NPPF. The community were clear throughout the consultation in their desire to protect the Green Belt, which they consider to be a much-valued asset. Nevertheless, Green Belt sites can be released as part of any review undertaken, for example by the Local Authority. Clause A relates to this. Clearly the changes to national policy in December 2024 also allow for Grey Belt to be identified. The CNP has not sought to identify such areas, as this would be undertaken at the strategic level as part of any future Green Belt Review at the local authority level. Part 2e would allow flexibility for such an occasion; should grey belt sites be identified by the local authority, they would need to adhere to the 'Golden Rules' as set out in the NPPF, which the SG did not consider necessary to repeat in the policy.'

7.21 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to the location of development in the neighbourhood area. It will focus new development in locations which have ready access to commercial and community facilities and which will contribute towards the local delivery of sustainable development. I am also satisfied that the Plan's approach to development in the Green Belt is appropriate. As CPC comment in its response to the clarification note this is a strategic matter to be addressed by SHBC. Equally it will be for developers to promote development in the Green Belt which meet the grey belt tests in the NPPF.

- 7.22 The order of the elements of the policy does not have a natural flow. I recommend that the order of the policy becomes the first, third, fourth and the second parts (of the submitted Plan). CPC responded positively to this proposition.
- 7.23 I also recommend that the third part of the policy should have a positive (what development proposals should provide) rather than negative (what should not arise from development) approach. CPC responded positively to this proposition. I also correct an error in part 2e of the policy (as submitted).
- 7.24 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Revise the order of the policy so it follows the first, third, fourth and the second parts (of the submitted Plan).

Replace the third part of the policy (as submitted) with: ‘Proposals for development of backland sites, including residential garden land, will only be supported where they would safeguard and where practicable contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local area.’

Reposition part 2d of the policy so that it appears after part 2g (and reorganise the letters accordingly).

In the first element of part 2 of the policy include ‘or’ at the end of a-c (as reordered) and ‘and’ at the end of e and f (as reordered).

In part 2e of the policy (as submitted) replace ‘sites allocated for in’ with ‘sites allocated for development in’

Update Figures 3, 4 and 5 (and use consistent symbology) to align to the proposed (Regulation 19) Local Plan settlement boundary for Chobham

Policy CH2: Meeting local housing needs

- 7.25 This policy seeks to influence the size, type, mix and affordability of housing development so that it can meet the specific housing needs of the parish as well as contributing to the broader strategic housing needs.
- 7.26 ADP Fairoaks/Vistry Group comment that the development of land at Fairoaks would enable a greater housing mix and more affordable homes to be provided in line with the policy, especially if land at Fairoaks Airport is deemed to be Grey Belt and 50% affordable housing is required.
- 7.27 SHBC raise a series of comments both on the policy and the supporting text which seek to clarify the way in which local housing needs would be delivered. In part 1b) the comments would make a clearer distinction between affordable housing and First Homes. CPC has responded positively to the suggestions, and I am happy to recommend them accordingly. They will bring the clarity required by the NPPF and allow SHBC to implement the policy through the development management process.

- 7.28 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In 1a) add 'subject to viability' at the end.

Replace 1b) with:

'Proposals that enable greater affordability uplift and prioritise local people (see Glossary) when it comes to allocating housing will be particularly supported. Proposals for First Homes that enable an uplift of up to 50% to the discounts provided to assist single occupants on median and lower quartile income, will be supported. Where such an uplift is demonstrated to be unviable, proposals should provide at least a 30% discount. Wherever practicable, proposals for First Homes should seek to prioritise those with a local connection to Chobham parish and key workers.'

In 4.14 replace 'Regulation 18' with 'Regulation 19'

Ensure consistency between paragraphs 4.13, 4.22 and 4.23 by reference to Local Housing Needs Assessment (which is document HO2 in the Local Plan evidence base).

Replace paragraph 4.25 with:

'The community in Chobham is ageing. The number of those aged 65+ in Chobham has risen by 31% since 2001. Policy H6 (Specialist Housing) of the emerging (Regulation 19) Local Plan makes provision for specialist housing, including care and extra care spaces, to serve those in the borough. Given the limited scope of available space in Chobham for development, it is unlikely that this provision will take place locally. Therefore, it will be important to ensure that any housing developed in the parish is accessible and adaptable to meet people's changing needs over their lives, so that they can stay at home for longer. Policy H5 (Range and Mix of Housing) proposes that all homes should meet Building Regulations Part M4(2) (or subsequent standards) and that on sites of 20 or more net new units, at least 5% of new homes and 10% of affordable homes should meet Building Regulation M4(3)(2)(a) unless site specific constraints can be demonstrated. The [Building Regulations 2010 Access to and Use of Buildings](#) contains guidance on this matter. The Neighbourhood Plan supports this approach.'

Policy CH3: Character and design of development

- 7.29 This policy seeks to ensure that new development is in keeping with and contributes positively to the local character of the village and wider parish. The policy and its supporting text add greater detail to the Core Strategy policies, in particular Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Sustainable Development and Design).
- 7.30 The approach taken in the policy is underpinned by the Chobham Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix B). It is an excellent document and provides a real depth to the overall policy.

7.31 SHBC comment that:

'The Council notes that criterion 3 of this Policy references the need to respect valued views but that the views within the Chobham Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal differ from those included within the Neighbourhood Plan in Policy CH12.'

7.32 ADP Fair Oaks/Vistry Group comment that:

'The Land at Fair Oaks Airport is designated within the 'Rural Hinterland' Character Area. The majority of the Site does not reflect the key landscape or settlement characteristics of this Character Area, particularly the previously developed part of the Site as recognised in the Landscape Appraisal (see Appendix 7). Notably, this policy is not supported by any up to date landscape evidence. Reference is made to the list of evidence base documents on the CNP website, this refers to the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment dated 2015. Significantly, there is no reference in this document to key views. Savills dispute the key view 8 Views over Fair Oaks (see further detail in paragraphs 1.39-1.43 below). Draft Policy CH3 Section 2 currently is worded as "Development proposals should conserve and, where practicable, enhance the character of the Conservation Area or Character Area in which it is located...". It is important for the Policy to be flexible and to recognise that there are exceptions within the Character Areas. [suggested amended wording is provided].'

7.33 In its response to the clarification note on this representation CPC commented that:

'The Design Guidance and Codes for Chobham was prepared externally by the Urban Design Team at AECOM. They undertook extensive work, in consultation with the community, to map out the local character areas in the parish and the Guidance provides evidence of this. Whilst it is accepted that Fair Oaks Airport comprises an economic use within the character area described as rural hinterland, the SG consider that nature of the activity does not detract from the overall character as described in the Design Guidance. View 8, as identified in the Views policy, describes this and provides photographs of residents walking in this area and views across the site which contribute to the character of the area.'

The consultee has suggested that some wording of policy CH3 be amended. We would prefer not to include this text (and) consider that this part of the Parish does contribute to the character described within the rural hinterland context.'

7.34 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy takes a positive approach to character and design and is a first-class local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. In addition, it is locally-distinctive and underpinned by the Design Guidance and Codes. In this context I recommend that the second part of the policy is applied in a proportionate way. This will allow SHBC to implement the policy through the development management process and will ensure consistency within the overall policy.

7.35 I have considered carefully the comments from ADP Fair Oaks/Vistry Group. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate and balanced approach. Nevertheless, I recommend that the supporting text is expanded to provide general guidance about the interface between new development and character.

- 7.36 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace part 2 of the policy with: ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should conserve and, where practicable, enhance the character of the Conservation Area and/or Character Area in which it is located (as shown on Figures 9 and 10, described in the Chobham Design Guidance and Codes, Appendix B).’

Remove the second ‘and’ between Parts 4d and 4e of the policy

At the end of paragraph 5.11 add: ‘Part 2 of the policy seeks to ensure that development proposals should conserve and, where practicable, enhance the character of the Conservation Area and/or Character Area in which it is located. In circumstances where land that does not fully reflect those of a wider character area, or where the balance of the importance of the proposals outweighs its impact on the character area, the Borough Council will be able to make decisions based on the contents of the overall development plan and all material planning considerations.’

Policy CH4: Energy efficiency and design

- 7.37 This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials, and energy use. This will help to mitigate against climate change and contribute to achieving the national target of zero net carbon by 2050. The policy has four related parts as follows:
- supporting measures to incorporate design and environmental performance measures and standards to reduce energy consumption;
 - commenting that proposals should seek to incorporate the following sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature, and location;
 - Proposals for the retrofitting of buildings, including listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy will be supported; and
 - proposals for individual and community scale energy schemes, for instance the installation of solar panels on community and public sector buildings, will be supported subject to a series of criteria.
- 7.38 I am satisfied that the first, third and fourth parts of the policy have regard to Section 14 of the NPPF and meet the basic conditions.
- 7.39 ADP Fairoaks/Vistry Group comment that the second part of the policy goes beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations without any supporting evidence including viability testing, and is therefore unjustified. I have considered this matter carefully and in the context of Section 14 of NPPF and the Written Ministerial Statement of December 2023 on local energy efficiency standards. I am satisfied that part 2 of the policy has regard to national policy. Its approach is that proposals should seek (rather than be required to) to incorporate a series of sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature, and location. It is also clear that such measures

should not be financially unviable, impracticable or where they would have a detrimental impact on character, landscape, and views.

- 7.40 I correct an error in the second part of the policy which was acknowledged by CPC in its response to the clarification note. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the second part of the policy replace ‘unviable’ with ‘viable’

Policy CH5: Minimising the risk of flooding

- 7.41 The Plan advises that the character of the parish is largely influenced by hydrogeological features, including watercourses, agricultural land drains, roadside ditches, and springs. These are each vulnerable to development, and in fact there have been multiple incidents of flooding notably impacting the southern part of the village. Whilst flooding issues are generally dealt with at the strategic level, the Plan comments that its preparation presents an opportunity to encourage effective sustainable drainage solutions that can add additional capacity and flexibility to water drainage systems in cost effective ways.
- 7.42 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach towards minimising the risks of flooding and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.
- 7.43 Section 2 of the policy comments that development proposals will not be supported unless there is sufficient capacity in the local sewerage system and that any new connections will not increase the risk of system back up/flooding or cause any adverse impact to the neighbourhood area environment. SHBC advises that this approach is at odds with the approach taken in the submitted Local Plan, and does not provide the flexibility for appropriate mitigation. I recommend that this element of the policy is modified to reflect these matters.
- 7.44 Section 3 of the policy seeks to encourage the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems. I sought CPC’s comment about the extent to which the approach should be more explicit given that ‘encouraged’ has little weight in a development plan context. In its response to the clarification note CPC advised that:
- ‘(it) would be minded to strengthening this, by amending the word ‘encouraged’ to ‘required’, in line with national policy. We would also be content to include reference in the supporting text to Surrey County Council’s (SCC) planning advice noting that from 6 October 2025, all new planning application consultations will be assessed by SCC using the new national standards.*
- 7.45 Based on all the evidence I recommend that part 3 of the policy is modified so that development proposals should provide sustainable drainage systems where it is practicable to do so. I also recommended that the second part of the policy is modified so that it provides the opportunity for suitably mitigated proposals to proceed. This reflects SHBC’s representation on this matter and CPC’s response to the clarification note.

- 7.46 I also recommend a modification to the wording used in the first part of the policy to recognise the role of a neighbourhood plan in the wider development plan. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘must’ with ‘should’

Replace the second part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity in the local sewerage system and that any new connections will not increase the risk of system back up/flooding or cause any adverse impact to the neighbourhood area environment. Where appropriate, development proposals should ensure that infrastructure can be delivered and phased through either a Grampian condition or a legal agreement.’

Replace the first sentence of the third part of the policy with:

‘Where it is practicable to do so, development proposals should incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), as set out in the Chobham Design Guidance and Codes, with run-off rates no greater than greenfield sites.’

Policy CH6: Conserving heritage assets

- 7.47 This policy recognises the important contribution that heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) make to the local character and distinctiveness of Chobham, both individually and collectively. It comments that, where possible, they should be conserved, enhanced, and celebrated.
- 7.48 I noted the significance of the built heritage of the neighbourhood during the visit. In general terms the policy has regard to Section 16 of the NPPF. Nevertheless, I sought advice from CPC on the extent to which the first, second and fourth parts of the policy bring any added value to relevant national and local planning policies. In addition, in relation to the third part of the policy which addresses non-designated heritage assets, given the approach taken in paragraphs 5.62/5.63 and the policy wording I sought commentary on the extent to which this part of the policy serve any practical purpose. In its response to the clarification note CPC advised that:

‘The original intention had been to identify non-designated heritage assets and include these explicitly within the policy. However, the work was somewhat overtaken by SHBC, who were in the process of updating their local list of heritage assets, hence the proposed NDHAs would already feature in that updated list. To that end, the SG are mindful that the Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the policy could be seen to simply repeat national policy and could be removed.’

Part 4 is considered helpful in that whilst a Conservation Area Appraisal does exist for the Chobham Conservation Area, it was produced in 2001 and much has changed since then in terms of national and local policy and guidance. The SG would be minded to retaining this clause as it does refer to the Design Guidance and Codes, which

provide an updated approach to design generally in the parish, including with the Conservation Area.

Part 4 is considered helpful in that whilst a Conservation Area Appraisal does exist for the Chobham Conservation Area, it was produced in 2001 and much has changed since then in terms of national and local policy and guidance. The SG would be minded to retaining this clause as it does refer to the Design Guidance and Codes, which provide an updated approach to design generally in the parish, including with the Conservation Area.'

- 7.49 In this helpful context I recommend the deletion of the first three parts of the policy. I also recommend that the fourth part of the policy is recast so that it more closely relates to the development management process. I also recommend a consequential modification to the supporting text so that it clarifies the more limited scope of the modified policy.
- 7.50 I recommend modifications to paragraph 5.62 and to Figure 15 to reflect the comments made by SHBC on non-designated heritage asserts and CPC's response to the clarification note. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Delete parts 1, 2 and 3 of the policy

Replace part 4 of the policy with:

'Development proposals in the Chobham Conservation Area should ensure that they contribute to the preservation or enhancement of the historic environment, in accordance with the guidance set out in the Chobham Conservation Area Appraisal and the Chobham Design Guidance and Codes.'

At the end of paragraph 5.52 add: 'Given the context provided by national and local planning policies, the policy focuses on the added value to decisions in the Chobham Conservation Area provided by the Chobham Conservation Area Appraisal and the Chobham Design Guidance and Codes.'

Replace paragraph 5.62 with: 'As part of the Plan preparation process, the community was invited to suggest any heritage assets that they considered should be recognised for their contribution to local character and history. As the Borough Council is in the process of amending their Local List, suggestions were forwarded to them for inclusion, including Benham's Corner and Chobham Victorian Cemetery (Figure 15).'

Remove the photograph of Emmetts Mill Bridge in Figure 15.

Policy CH7: Chobham village centre

- 7.51 The context for the policy is that Chobham village centre is identified in the emerging Local Plan as a Local Centre, providing a focal point for the community in terms of retail, local services and amenities and shared space. This policy supports development proposals that will help to ensure that the village centre remains vibrant, attractive, safe, and accessible.

- 7.52 The policy also recognises and supports the role of Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade in serving the everyday needs of nearby residents. I looked carefully at the Village Centre and the Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade during the visit. Their importance to the local community was self-evident. The policy correctly acknowledges the importance of economically vibrant mixed-use centres.
- 7.53 Plainly the Village Centre and the Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade have different scales and significance. In this context I sought advice from CPC about the appropriateness of addressing the two centres in the same policy. I also sought advice about in the second part of the policy the extent to which the first criterion should apply only to the Village Centre. In its response to the clarification note, CPC advised that:
- 'We would be minded to retaining the policy but perhaps focus it on Chobham Village Centre, with a clause at the end setting out which parts are also relevant to development proposals in the Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade, which would be Part 2, Part 3 (b and c), and Part 3.'*
- 7.54 I have considered these matters very carefully. I have concluded that it is important that the policy establishes a clear policy distinction between the Village Centre and the Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade. They are very different in their character and fulfil different functions in the local retail hierarchy. Plainly the Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade has a very local focus. To achieve a clear distinction I recommend the inclusion of a fifth element of the policy which focuses specifically on Chertsey Road (and which then focuses the policy for the village centre in part 2 of the policy).
- 7.55 I also recommend other more detailed modifications to the policy as raised by SHBC and as agreed by CPC. They will bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In part 2 delete 'and/ or Chertsey Neighbourhood Parade'

In part 2c replace 'full viability report' with 'marketing report' and 'Appendix E' with 'Appendix D'

Replace the second sentence of the fourth part of the policy with: 'Any alterations to heritage assets should contribute to the enhancement of the historic environment.'

Include an additional section to read:

'5. Chertsey Road Neighbourhood Parade: The permanent change of ground floor use of Classes E, F1 and F2 to other uses within the Chertsey Neighbourhood Parade will only be supported where the following can be demonstrated:

- **the proposed use will maintain the vitality and viability of the Neighbourhood Parade;**

- the premises in question has not been in continuous active use for at least 12 consecutive months; and
- the premises has no potential for reoccupation as demonstrated through the results both of a marketing report (as per Appendix D) and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least 6 months.'

Policy CH8: Strategic and locally important employment sites

- 7.56 As a context to the policy the Plan advises that beyond the Village Centre, it is considered important that opportunities for employment are available in the parish. This will help to reduce the reliance on need to commute out for work, in turn reducing localised traffic. It comments that two sites in the parish (Fairoaks Airport and Chobham Business Centre; and Longcross Studios) are identified as Strategic Employment Sites, as per the emerging Local Plan (although this is not yet adopted). Highams Park is identified as a Locally Important Employment Site.
- 7.57 ADP Fairoaks/Vistry Group comment that the policy mimics Policy ER3 of the submitted Local Plan, which does not remove the Strategic Employment Site at Fairoaks Airport from the Green Belt. It also comments that there is no need to link the function of the Strategic Employment Site to the wider function of the site.
- 7.58 SHBC comments that:
- 'The Regulation 19 Local Plan defines all three employment sites in the parish as Strategic Employment sites, which are given the highest level of protection against the loss of existing employment uses. There are no sites proposed as Locally Important Employment sites. The Regulation 19 Local Plan proposes boundary amendments to all three sites, some considerable e.g. at Highams Park. In order to be in general conformity with the emerging policies in the Development Plan (a series of amendments) are suggested.'*
- 7.59 By way of context whilst there are three designated employment sites within the emerging Local Plan in the parish, their names and employment statuses have evolved through stages of plan-making.
- 7.60 Paragraphs 6.17 and 6.18 suggest that the policy has been included to safeguard the two proposed Strategic Employment Sites given that the emerging Local Plan has not yet been adopted. In this context, I sought commentary from CPC on the extent to which the approach taken is a strategic policy rather than a neighbourhood plan policy
- 7.61 In its response to the clarification note CPC advised that:
- '(it) has spent some time debating this policy. It was considered important to include it in order to safeguard the few employment sites that exist in the Parish from potential redevelopment to an alternative use. This was felt important in particular in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan and with the timeline for the emerging Local Plan appearing to be moving back.'*

7.62 In its separate response to the clarification note SHBC advised that

'In response to this question the Council has reviewed Policy CH8. This Policy identifies a number of Strategic and Locally Important employment sites in the Parish and the approach to development proposals within them. The Borough Council has noted in its response to the Submission Neighbourhood Plan that these allocations do not fully align with the Pre Submission Surrey Heath Local Plan and had suggested amendment to the classification of Highams Park and consequential changes to the Policy wording.'

Policy CH8 repeats elements of the Pre-Submission Local Plan Policies ER2 and ER3. Appendix 3 of the Local Plan identifies ER2 and ER3 as strategic policies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. Whilst neighbourhood plans can have similar policies to strategic policies, on reflection the Council considers that there is no additional policy guidance, local to Chobham that is provided by Policy CH8, although the Council understands the reason why this Policy was included by the Parish having regard to the timescales for adoption of the Local Plan.

Whilst the Council did not raise this in its response to the submitted Neighbourhood Plan on this issue, on reflection, and having regard to the considerations above it does consider that CH8 is a strategic Policy. The Council is mindful however, that no formal view on the Local Plan Policy approach to designated employment areas under Policies ER2 and ER3 has been taken by the Local Plan Inspector.'

7.63 I have considered the policy very carefully, and in the context of SHBC's response to the clarification note. The approach taken by CPC is understandable given that the neighbourhood plan examination is likely to be completed before that for the submitted Local Plan. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions for the following reasons:

- by its definition it is strategic in nature and as such it is not for the neighbourhood plan to address;
- there is no need for a neighbourhood plan to repeat or restate policies in an adopted Local Plan or a policy in an emerging Local Plan;
- the submitted Local Plan remains at examination and the inspectors' conclusions (both generally and on Policies ER2/ER3 are not known at this stage); and
- ADC Fairoaks/Vistry Group (who have made comments on the submitted Plan) have also made a detailed representation on the submitted Local Plan.

7.64 In all the circumstances I recommend that the policy is deleted. I also recommend the deletion of the supporting text. I have commented later in this report (paragraph 7.122) about the potential need for a review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan. Should SHBC's proposals for employment sites continue to feature in the adopted Local Plan there would be no need for the neighbourhood plan to repeat the relevant policy. Nevertheless, the Plan's supporting text could be revised and refreshed should CPC wish to do so to signpost the readers of the Plan to what would be a key element of the delivery of employment opportunities

in the neighbourhood area. This would provide a broader context to the contents of Policy CH9.

Delete the policy

Delete paragraphs 6.15 to 6.20 and Figure 18

Policy CH9: Supporting flexible workspaces and opportunities for homeworking

- 7.65 This policy recognises the growing contribution of home-based and small-to-medium sized businesses in Chobham and seeks to encourage opportunities for them, which might for instance be through the provision of start-up and move-on business units or co-working space. The Plan advises that this would provide a greater incentive and opportunity for local people to work locally. Homeworking too has become commonplace for many in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 7.66 The second part of the policy comments that as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals for new workspaces should demonstrate the way in which they can be incorporated within their immediate locality without generating any unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties and on the capacity and safety of the local highways network. This provides appropriate environmental safeguards
- 7.67 The policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Section 6 of the NPPF. I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Policy CH10: Green and blue infrastructure and delivering biodiversity net gain

- 7.68 The Plan advises that this policy seeks to ensure that the multiple benefits of Chobham's green and blue spaces – including their importance in combating pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity, and geodiversity and in off-setting the effects of air pollution - are recognised and enhanced. This applies particularly where individual spaces have a greater collective value as part of wider chains of green infrastructure. The Plan advises that this approach will serve to support the requirement to conserve and, where possible, provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy whilst accommodating sustainable development.
- 7.69 I note the approach taken in the first part of the policy. However, I sought advice from CPC on the extent to which there is any local evidence or research to support a 20% requirement for biodiversity net gain. In its response to the clarification note, it commented that:

'The policy does not require a net gain of 20%, rather it would strongly support this. This aligns with the approach proposed in the emerging Local Plan, which sets out in para 6.30 that "a higher target of 20% is both necessary and deliverable in Surrey Heath. Evidence of 'need' is provided in the Surrey Nature Partnership's report 'The State of Surrey's Nature' (2017) which demonstrates that Surrey's rate of biodiversity loss is even more severe than the national average and it is therefore justified to require a higher target to halt and reverse these historic losses. The basis for adopting 20% net gain across Surrey is set out in a paper by the Surrey Nature Partnership.

Furthermore, the Council is developing a local habitat bank to provide offsite biodiversity units including on Council-owned land, in support of demonstrating the feasibility of providing offsite gains. The Local Plan Viability Assessment 2024 has demonstrated that 20% BNG requirement will not impact viability of delivery of housing sites.” Once adopted, the Local Plan requirement will supersede this clause in the CNP, uplifting the strongly support statement to a requirement.’

- 7.70 SHBC comments about the policy’s requirements for offsite Biodiversity Units, ‘notable and veteran trees’, and for the retention of all hedgerows.
- 7.71 ADP Fair Oaks/Vistry Group comment that greater clarity is required in the Plan and evidence base with respect of SANG provision, including additional SANG required to facilitate new development, and the positive aspects arising of its provision on Chobham and the wider area.
- 7.72 Peter Fitzsimon comments that by not following the national minimum biodiversity target of 10% nor referencing exemptions, the policy does not have regard to national policy and therefore does not conform with the basic conditions.
- 7.73 Surrey County Council recommends that part 2 of the policy is updated using the text which includes LNRS statutory guidance.
- 7.74 I have considered carefully the overall approach taken in the policy and the comments made. In general terms the policy has regard to Section 15 of the NPPF. Nevertheless, I recommend the following package of modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow SHBC to be able to apply its approach in an effective way through the development management process:
- the simplification of the first part of the policy including the reference to the aspirational target of 20% biodiversity net gain which is already adequately addressed in the supporting text. Plainly any proposal which delivered above the 10% statutory minimum would comply with the policy;
 - the recasting of the second part of the policy based on the County Council’s representation. The recommended modification also addresses SHBC’s representation on this part of the policy;
 - the simplification of the third part of the policy;
 - the recasting of part 5a to ensure that the Plan’s approach to trees has regard to national policy; and
 - the refinement of part 5d of the policy.
- 7.75 I also recommend consequential modifications to the supporting text. The principal modification is to paragraph 7.5, the emphasis of which shifts to setting out the emerging context for the delivery of 20% biodiversity net gain in the wider Borough. In some cases, paragraphs of the supporting text repeat or restate elements of the policy and as such I recommend the deletion of these paragraphs.
- 7.76 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals should be designed to create, conserve, enhance and manage green and blue spaces. They should connect chains of green and blue infrastructure, as identified on Figure 20 and deliver the national minimum measurable biodiversity net gain of 10%, measured using the statutory Biodiversity metric.’

Replace the second part of the policy with:

‘Where Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units cannot be delivered on-site, off-site delivery should be prioritised within the parish—focusing on areas identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Measures should align with the ecological priorities of those areas. Where actions correlate with mapped measures in the LNRS, they will receive a strategic significance uplift in the unit calculations, as set out in the statutory guidance. If delivery within the parish is not possible, other suitable locations within, or as close as reasonably possible to, the local planning authority area should be considered. In all cases, applicants must clearly justify how their proposals follow the BNG hierarchy and demonstrate that all efforts to deliver habitat locally were fully explored before other options were sought. Statutory biodiversity credits should only be used as a last resort, in accordance with national policy.’

Replace the third part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces will be supported to enhance the green infrastructure of the neighbourhood area. Development proposals which would damage such connectivity will not be supported.’

Replace part 5a of the policy with:

‘There is no unacceptable loss of, or damage to, existing trees or woodlands during or because of development. Development proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) will not be supported unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.’

Replace part 5d of the policy with:

‘Development that would result in the loss of, or the deterioration in the quality of, hedgerows of amenity or other value will not be supported other than where appropriate and proportionate mitigation is incorporated into the proposal. Where trees would be removed to secure vehicular access, the new access should include trees at either end of the retained hedgerow to assist the ongoing passage of wildlife along the line of the hedgerow.’

Replace paragraph 7.5 with:

‘A higher target of 20% biodiversity net gain is being addressed in Surrey Heath Borough. Evidence of ‘need’ is provided in the Surrey Nature Partnership’s report ‘The

State of Surrey's Nature' (2017), comments that Surrey's rate of biodiversity loss is even more severe than the national average and it is therefore justified to require a higher target to halt and reverse these historic losses. The basis for looking to adopt a 20% net gain across Surrey is set out in a paper by the Surrey Nature Partnership. Furthermore, the Borough Council is developing a local habitat bank to provide offsite biodiversity units including on council-owned land, in support of demonstrating the feasibility of providing offsite gains. The Local Plan Viability Assessment (2024) has demonstrated that 20% biodiversity net gain requirement will not impact viability of delivery of housing sites. This evolving matter can be addressed in a review of the neighbourhood plan following the adoption of the (submitted) Surrey Heath Local Plan.'

Delete paragraphs 7.11 -7.14 and 7.16- 17

Policy CH11: Local Green Space

7.77 The policy proposes the designation of thirteen Local Green Spaces (LGSs). They are shown on Figure 21. Detailed maps of each space are shown in Appendix E along with information as to how they each meet the NPPF criteria.

7.78 I looked at the proposed LGSs carefully during the visit. I noted their differing land uses, locations, and sizes. I saw that there was a concentration of proposed LGS in and around the Village Centre.

7.79 The policy simply lists the proposed LGSs without including policy wording. In its response to the clarification note CPC advised that:

'it was minded not to repeat national policy on how local green spaces should be considered. However, we would be minded to include the following text to the end of the policy to aid interpretation: Development proposals within the identified Local Green Spaces will not be supported except in very special circumstances'

7.80 Based on my observations and the information included within the Plan (and Appendix E) I am satisfied that proposed LGSs 3/4/7/9-13 meet the criteria in paragraphs 106/7 of the NPPF. The Cricket Ground (LGS4), and the Recreation Ground (LGS12) are iconic and locally-distinctive LGSs. I comment in more detail on the other proposed LGS where I asked questions in the clarification note or which are the subject of representations.

LGS 1 Wishmore Cross Academy

7.81 Appendix E comments that the site is the playing fields associated with the Wishmore Cross Academy central to the village. I looked at the site as best as I could during the visit from the footpath to the west (linking Burr Hill Road to Windsor Road).

7.82 Surrey County Council advises that:

'(it) supports the protection of green spaces. However, education land is fully protected under statute and is not open space fully accessible to the public. Local Green Spaces are usually available for public use and so such a policy might conflict with the schools' safeguarding and community shared use arrangements. We therefore object to the

proposals to designate Wishmore Cross Academy field and Playing Field west of High Street as Local Green Space.

Whilst designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present, if they were to be designated any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiations.

We would also like to see the plan acknowledge that exceptions to Policy CH11 might be acceptable where schools need to expand for operational reasons and as a last resort the only land available may comprise part of an existing playing field. There may be rare circumstances where the most sustainable option is to expand a school on at least part of a school playing field site, where this is to meet residents' needs and deliver sustainable development, community wellbeing and life-long learning objectives. Any such circumstance would need to ensure that any adverse effect on the function and character of open space be minimised. Clearly playing fields should be protected from loss to development, however 'Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to meeting the requirements for a sufficient choice of school places for existing and new communities. As per Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework, 'Local Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.'

7.83 In its response to the clarification note, CPC advised that

'We would be minded to retaining the two spaces as justified in the Plan and as explained in our Regulation 14 response on this point. We would, however, be content to include additional text within the policy to allow for flexibility. We consider this would be acceptable on local green space as per para 154 of the NPPF.'

7.84 I have considered this matter very carefully. In the context of my observations and the information in Appendix E I am satisfied that the proposed LGS meets the criteria in 106 and 107 of the NPPF. Furthermore, the recommended additional element of the policy will allow SHBC to come to its own decision on any proposals where the school may need to expand for operational reasons and as a last resort the only land available may comprise part of an existing playing field. This may constitute the very special circumstances as envisaged by the policy.

LGS 2 Chobham Water Meadows

7.85 As Appendix E comments, the land is an area set aside for recreational and wildlife purposes. It adjoins a Conservation area and Chobham settlement area to the west. It also advises that the site is a SANG and is within the Green Belt. The Plan advises that whilst this affords it protection, its reason for inclusion in the Plan is to formalise the importance it holds to the local community. It was the most cited space, aside from the commons, throughout the process.

7.86 I looked carefully at the proposed LGS. I saw its proximity to the village centre and its attractiveness. I sought advice from CPC on its size. In its response CPC advised and commented that:

'The space is 22.3ha. This is an area of land that is very much valued by the community and is central to the village in its location. It is used for informal recreation including for dog walking, as a space that avoids dogs using the SSSI. There is no upper limit definition as to what constitutes 'extensive'. We consider that it meets the Local Green Space criteria.'

7.87 I am satisfied that the proposed LGS complies with paragraph 106 of the NPPF and parts a (location) and b (demonstrably special) of paragraph 107 of the NPPF.

7.88 I have considered carefully the size of the proposed LGS. At 22 ha it is substantially larger than the other proposed LGSs in the Plan, and indeed those proposed in other neighbourhood plans. Nevertheless, given its clear importance of the LGS in the neighbourhood area and its operational role as a SANG, I am satisfied that, on balance, it is local in character and not an extensive tract of land. As such its designation meets the basic conditions

LGSs 5 (Broom Lane Allotments) and 6 (Red Lion Allotments)

7.89 Appendix E advises that proposed LGS 5 and 6 are allotments for growing flowers and vegetables.

7.90 The Chobham Poor Allotments Society has made a comprehensive representation which in summary advises that:

'The allocations are inaccurate and misleading in relation to the area of land which is actually in use as allotments, as the vast majority of the proposed allocations is not in use as allotments (and includes grazing land, and also includes privately owned gardens outside of the Charity's ownership);

The justifications for allocating the Broom Lane Site and Red Lion Road Site as a Local Green Space is provided in Appendix E to the Neighbourhood Plan is not reasoned nor sufficiently justified to meet the above policy requirements.

In conclusion, the Charity considers that insufficient justification has been provided for the allocation of either the Broom Lane Site or Red Lion Road Site as Local Green Space. The Neighbourhood Plan's proposed interference with the charitable purpose of the Charity in allocating the land is unlawful and ultra vires, and so susceptible to legal challenge.'

7.91 In its response to the clarification note, CPC comments that

'The Chobham Poor Allotment Society own two of the proposed Local Green spaces: Broom Lane Site and Red Lion Road Site. These spaces have been identified by the community as being very important to them to safeguard. As stated in The Chobham Poor Allotment Charity's representation, it is a charity which was "allotted" land in 1861 and the designated use for this land is for the benefit of the poor inhabitants of the ancient parish of Chobham. At the moment, parts of the land in question are used as allotments, and the local community value this provision. There is limited allotment provision in the Parish and demand is high. It is, however, accepted that the charity is under no legal obligation to provide allotments. Nevertheless, regardless of how the

land is used at any given time, the overall purpose remains that it is used to the benefit of local parishioners. We feel very strongly that the two spaces should be retained as local green space. Support for this was raised by the community during the engagement period for the neighbourhood plan and again at the Regulation 14 consultation. Parts of the sites are included as 'Green Space' (not to be confused with 'Local Green Space') within the emerging Local Plan. We consider that the boundaries as shown in the CNP are correct for the whole area of land that falls within the remit of delivering the purposes of the charity. This is with the exception of those areas that constitute private gardens, and we would be content to remove those from the designation. It is our understanding that the two plots on the western site have been sold fairly recently to private individuals.

- 7.92 I looked at the two proposed LGSs carefully during the visit. I noted their proximity the one to the other off Broom Lane. As highlighted in the representation I noted that the land included other uses beyond allotments. In the case of LGS 5 this included a paddock. In the case of LGS6 this included a dog training area. I assess the two sites on this basis.
- 7.93 It is not unusual for allotments and open recreation areas to be proposed as LGS in neighbourhood plans, and, based on local evidence and information, for those areas to be designated where they meet the basic conditions. In this case I am satisfied that the two areas are in close proximity to the communities they serve, and that they are local in character and not extensive tracts of land. In this latter context I am satisfied that they are separate parcels of land (in terms of appearance and boundary treatments).
- 7.94 I have considered carefully whether the two proposed LGSs are demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular significance. On the one hand, they are pleasant open areas on the northern edge of the village. On the other hand, the uses on each site is mixed and does not naturally relate to the examples cited in paragraph 107b of the NPPF. Furthermore, the areas within allotment use are marginal to each area. On the balance of the evidence, I am not satisfied that the two proposed LGSs meet the demonstrably special criteria for designation as LGSs.
- 7.95 In this context I recommend that they are deleted from the policy.

LGS 8 Playing Field

- 7.96 As Appendix E describes the proposed LGS is a grass playing field used by the children of St Lawrence school for exercise and for play. It also advises that the fields surround the historic village centre of Chobham contribute to the openness and rural nature of the village. I looked at the proposed LGS from the track running to the west of High Street to the south of the school.
- 7.97 The County Council objects to the proposed designation. The objection has already been captured in relation to LGS1 (paragraph 7.82) CPC's response to the clarification note on LGS1 also applies to this site.
- 7.98 I have considered this matter very carefully. In the context of my observations and the information in Appendix E I am satisfied that the proposed LGS meets the criteria in Chobham Neighbourhood Development Plan – Examiner's Report

106 and 107 of the NPPF. Furthermore, the recommended additional element of the policy will allow SHBC to come to its own decision on any proposal involving operational reasons of the school and the related playing field. This may constitute the very special circumstances as envisaged by the policy.

- 7.99 With these modifications to the policy itself and to the areas affected by the policy I am satisfied that with modifications it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Delete LGSs 5 and 6

At the end of the policy add: ‘Development proposals within the identified Local Green Spaces will not be supported except in very special circumstances.’

Delete LGSs 5/6 from Figure 21

Policy CH12: Locally significant views

- 7.100 This policy sets out a series of views in and across the parish, which have been identified by the community as being important to safeguard. The policy seeks to safeguard the views from inappropriate development. Details about each view are set out in Appendix F.
- 7.101 I note the comments in paragraph 7.40. I sought advice from CPC about the way in which it identified the views. In its response to the clarification note it advised that:

‘The community were made aware early in the process that there was an opportunity to identify views within the parish they considered to be important to them. This might be because they encompass a particular landscape of importance, a notable landmark or asset, they might evoke a sense of place and/or contribute to local character and how this can be appreciated. Views could be within the village or the wider countryside but would need to be viewable from a public location and be contained within the parish boundary.

The community were invited to provide their views on this in multiple ways: via the community survey and at the community events held at the village hall (which included maps for marking up).

Each suggested view was visited by members of the SG to consider whether it met the criteria as set out above, although it was acknowledged that there would be a level of subjectivity, which is acknowledged in national policy too, where NPPF Para 132 states “Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development”.

In addition to views suggested by the community, the SG wished to include the views as identified in the Chobham Conservation Area Appraisal, to give them greater credence (see Figure 1), although each was visited to ensure that the view identified was still valid.’

7.102 ADP Fairoaks/Vistry Group comment that:

‘View 8 – This view over Fairoaks concerns the Site at Fairoaks Airport. As set out above, no landscape evidence accompanies the draft CNP in respect of these views. The view is therefore unjustified by evidence.

It is also worth noting that the Site is only designated as Green Belt, a planning designation to keep land open. This is presently achieved by the Green Belt designation. There is no local or national landscape designation, nor evidence that the Site contributes, in any way, as a Valued Landscape.

The Parties therefore request that the view over Fairoaks is removed as to not preclude development.’

7.103 In its response to the clarification note CPC commented that:

‘(it) would prefer to retain the policy. This view was identified by the community. It was the subject of much debate locally. The policy is not intended to preclude development that might interfere with any of the identified views, rather to ensure that any development proposals impacting the view arcs are mindful of those impacts and find ways to mitigate them. This could be achieved through careful design. We do not consider it would be helpful to remove either the policy as a whole or this particular view, which is supported locally.’

7.104 Within the context of the information provided by CPC I am satisfied that the community has taken a balanced approach to identifying local views. In most cases they reflect key views in and around the village centre, or which capture the relationship between Chobham and the surrounding countryside (and as shown on Figure 22). Nevertheless, I recommend that the policy is modified so that it is more explicit about the requirements for development proposals.

7.105 View 8 is significantly different from the other views and is shown on a separately (on Figure 23). I looked at it carefully during the visit. I noted that it was mainly a road-related view rather than a traditional view from a vantage point or footpath. Whilst rights of way in the immediate area are shown on Figure 23, they do not correlate with the identified viewpoint. In this context I conclude that its inclusion in the policy is not justified. As such I recommend that the policy is modified to delete reference to View 8. I also recommend consequential modifications to the supporting text and the deletion of Figure 23.

7.106 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

‘The Plan identifies seven locally significant views on Figure 22.

As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals within the shaded arcs of the various views should be designed in a way that demonstrates how their layout, design and the wider masterplanning of the site have responded positively to the importance of the locally significant view or views

and, where necessary, mitigate any adverse impact of the proposal on those views.'

Replace paragraph 7.40 with:

'Located within a beautiful wooded and heathland landscape, there are a great number of viewpoints around the parish that are enjoyed by locals and visitors. In consultation with the community, and drawing on the Chobham Conservation Area Character Appraisal, seven specific views have been identified, which are felt to be locally significant and warrant safeguarding against the significant impacts that may incur as a result of development. Figure 22 map the views and further details about why they are important is contained in Appendix F. It should be noted that a majority of residents also mentioned the views in and across Chobham Common. As this area is significantly protected through national designations, it was not considered necessary to include these within the list.'

Delete Figure 23

Policy CH13: Dark skies

- 7.107 The Plan advises that parts of Chobham parish provide good locations from which to enjoy dark skies and stargazing, and that these dark skies also support both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife. This policy seeks to ensure that development does not encroach on this valued aspect of parish.
- 7.108 I noted the light profile in the neighbourhood area during the visit. Plainly it overlaps with the distribution of built development.
- 7.109 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and seeks to preserve dark skies where they exist. I recommend that the first part of the policy is recast so that it sets out requirements for new development rather than commenting on the outcomes of planning applications. This acknowledges that any such proposals will be determined based on all relevant development plan policies. I also recommend that the second part of the policy is deleted and that it is used to consolidate the existing supporting text. This acknowledges that whilst the guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professional is very helpful and well-considered, it does not have any status in the development plan.
- 7.110 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the first part of the policy with: 'Development proposals should demonstrate that, if external lighting is required, it protects the night sky from light pollution, and:'

Delete the second part of the policy.

At the end of paragraph 7.47 add: 'Development proposals should demonstrate that, if external lighting is required, it protects the night sky from light pollution, and provide details of the light source and intensity being used; the luminaire design, height, and

angle, adding baffles and cut-off shields where required; and control mechanisms to dim or switch off lighting schemes when not required.'

Policy CH14: Improving walking, cycling and equestrian opportunities

- 7.111 This policy seeks to enhance walking, cycling and equestrian opportunities along routes which are most likely to encourage a shift away from the private car, particularly for short journeys in and around Chobham.
- 7.112 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to these matters and has regard to Sections 8 and 9 of the NPPF. In this context I recommend a series of modifications to the wording of the policy and to the supporting text as raised by SHBC and as agreed by CPC in its response to the clarification note. In summary they will allow the policy to be implemented by SHBC through the development management system and to have the clarity required by the NPPF.
- 7.113 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In the second part of the policy delete 'strongly' and replace 'Figure 26' with 'Figure 28'

At the beginning of the second sentence of the second part of the policy insert 'Where appropriate,'

In paragraph 8.13 replace the first sentence with: 'Surrey County Council has published a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Surrey Heath (insert link).'

Policy CH15: New residential development parking space standards and design

- 7.114 The policy has two aims related to residential vehicle parking. The first is to ensure that adequate off-road residential car parking is provided within new development to reduce adding to problems associated with congestion. The Plan advises that this is particularly important in a semi-rural environment such as Chobham, where there is limited public transport and a high reliance on the private motor vehicle. The second aim is to ensure that the number of domestic parking spaces is adequate for the rural setting and that the dimensions of parking spaces are suited to modern vehicles.
- 7.115 I note the approach taken in the policy and the supporting text. I raised with CPC the extent to which the policy intended to replace the requirement in the Surrey Parking Standards and whether the high minimum parking standards lead to a car-dominated landscape. In its response it advised that:

'the policy intends to respond to the fact that there is a high level of car ownership locally, due in part to the rural nature of the parish. There is also a lack of adequate public transport. The objective is to ensure that new development provides adequate space taking into account this locally-specific aspect. (CPC) followed a similar approach taken by Windlesham Parish in their neighbourhood plan, which experiences a similar issue, and which has since passed its referendum. As in that Plan, the (Plan) policy does not impose minimum requirements, rather guidance on the spaces

required. We consider this an adequate approach, but if necessary, would be minded to include an additional sentence at the end to suggest “unless it can be demonstrated that this would render the scheme unviable, undeliverable or significantly impact the appearance of a proposed development”

- 7.116 I have considered this issue very carefully. I note that the policy seeks to apply the car parking standards where space permits, and to be consistent with the approach taken in another neighbourhood plan in the Borough. Nevertheless, I recommend the inclusion of additional wording suggested by CPC (with my own additions) into the first part of the policy to ensure that it does not have unintended consequences. I also correct an error in part 1a of the policy.
- 7.117 I recommend that the third part of the policy is modified by the removal of the unnecessary supporting text embedded in its wording. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In part 1a of the policy insert a gap between ‘bedroom’ and ‘dwellings’

At the end of the first part of the policy add: ‘unless it can be demonstrated that this level of provision would render the scheme unviable or undeliverable, or detract unacceptably from the design, layout and appearance of a proposed development.’

Replace the third part of the policy with:

‘Vehicle parking facilities should be designed to match the character of the development. Where garages are included, they should have minimum internal dimensions of 3m wide by 7m long with an unobstructed entry width of 2.3 metres. (ref: Parking Standards design and good practice, Essex CC 2009). Other vehicle parking facilities should have a minimum dimension of 2.9m by 5.5m.’

Policy CH16: Providing a range of community facilities

- 7.118 The Plan advises that the community facilities within the parish provide an important resource for its residents, both old and young. They enable a range of activities and services to be run, which are important for people’s wellbeing and day-to-day needs. This policy seeks to ensure that those living in and moving to the parish are adequately served with a range of good quality facilities and activities and that there are opportunities for residents to shape this provision.
- 7.119 The first and second parts of the policy set out a series of criteria for new community facilities and play areas to good effect. The third part of the policy looks to safeguard existing facilities. It acknowledges that the use and viability of facilities may change in the Plan period and that alternative facilities may come forward.
- 7.120 This is a very effective and locally distinctive policy. Appendix D helpfully underpins the approach taken. The policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Implementation and Plan Review

- 7.121 Section 10 of the Plan addresses these matters to very good effect.
- 7.122 The fourth bullet point of paragraph 10.3 advises that the adoption of the emerging Local Plan may trigger a light-touch review of the Plan. I recommend that this commentary is consolidated by the inclusion of an indicative timetable.

At the end of the fourth bullet point of paragraph 10.3 add: 'The Parish Council will assess the need for a review of the Plan within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan.'

Other Matters – General

- 7.123 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 because 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 because of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters such as factual errors which have been acknowledged by CPC. It will be appropriate for SHBC and CPC 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 and to accommodate any administrative and technical changes.

Other Matters – Specific

- 7.124 SHBC has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. I have addressed them on a policy-by-policy basis where they are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.125 SHBC suggest a series of revisions and additions to the general elements of the Plan. I have considered the various issues very carefully together with CPC's responses to the suggestions. To bring the clarity required by the NPPF, I recommend that the Plan is modified to address the following points as raised by SHBC (and using the SHBC descriptions):
- *Paragraph 1.19*
 - *Paragraph 1.31*
 - *Paragraph 2.7*
 - *Paragraph 2.14*
 - *Chapter 12 – Policies Maps - The proposed settlement boundary for the Local Plan should be amended to align with the Regulation 19 version.*
 - *Chapter 14 – Evidence Base*

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 and to designate a package of local green spaces.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Chobham 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 Surrey Heath Borough Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Chobham 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 neighbourhood 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 Surrey Heath Borough Council on 12 November 2013.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to the examination of the Plan. The Parish Council's responses to the clarification note were both comprehensive and helpful.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
18 November 2025