



## **GRAFTON UNDERWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DECISION STATEMENT**

### **Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)**

#### **Summary**

Following an independent examination, North Northamptonshire Council confirms that the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan), as revised by the modifications set out in Table 1 below, complies with the Basic Conditions and legal requirements, and can therefore proceed to a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum.

This Decision Statement and Examiner's Report will be made available on North Northamptonshire Council's website and on Grafton Underwood Parish Council's website. Paper copies will be deposited at North Northamptonshire Council Office in Thrapston and at Thrapston library for inspection during opening hours.

#### **Background**

Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Localism Act 2011, Grafton Underwood Parish Council have prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish of Grafton Underwood with the help of the local community.

The Plan area, which comprises the whole of Grafton Underwood parish, was designated by the former Kettering Borough Council (now subsumed in North Northamptonshire Council) on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

The Plan has been subject to statutory public consultation. The second of these consultations was organised by North Northamptonshire Council inviting representations on the Plan in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), during a six-week period starting on 1 September 2025 and closing on 13 October 2025.

#### **Independent Examination**

North Northamptonshire Council appointed Andrew Ashcroft of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited, with the consent of Grafton Underwood Parish Council, to undertake the examination of the Plan and to prepare a report of the independent examination. The Examiner determined that the examination could be undertaken without the need for a public hearing.

The Examiner's Report was issued on 6 March 2026. The Examiner concluded that, subject to recommended modifications, the Plan met all the Statutory Requirements

set out in paragraph 8(1) of schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and met the Basic Conditions (see Examiners Report paragraph 8.2).

### **Decision and Reasons**

Having considered each of the recommendations made by the Examiner's Report and the reasons for them, in consultation with the Parish Council, North Northamptonshire Council accepts the modifications proposed to the draft plan as detailed in Table 1 below. North Northamptonshire Council is satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, complies with legal requirements and can proceed to referendum.

The Examiner agreed with the designated Neighbourhood Plan area and recommended that there was no need for the referendum boundary to extend beyond the designated neighbourhood area (see Examiners Report paragraph 8.4). The Council agrees with this recommendation and concludes that any referendum that takes place in due course be contiguous with the boundary of the designated Plan area.

In line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 it is therefore proposed to hold a referendum to determine whether the Plan should be incorporated into the development plan for North Northamptonshire.

The following question will be posed at the referendum, in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012 (as amended):

*"Do you want North Northamptonshire Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Grafton Underwood to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"*

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The date for the referendum and further details will be published once agreed by the Council.

Signed:

George Candler  
Executive Director of Place and Economy (Deputy Chief Executive)

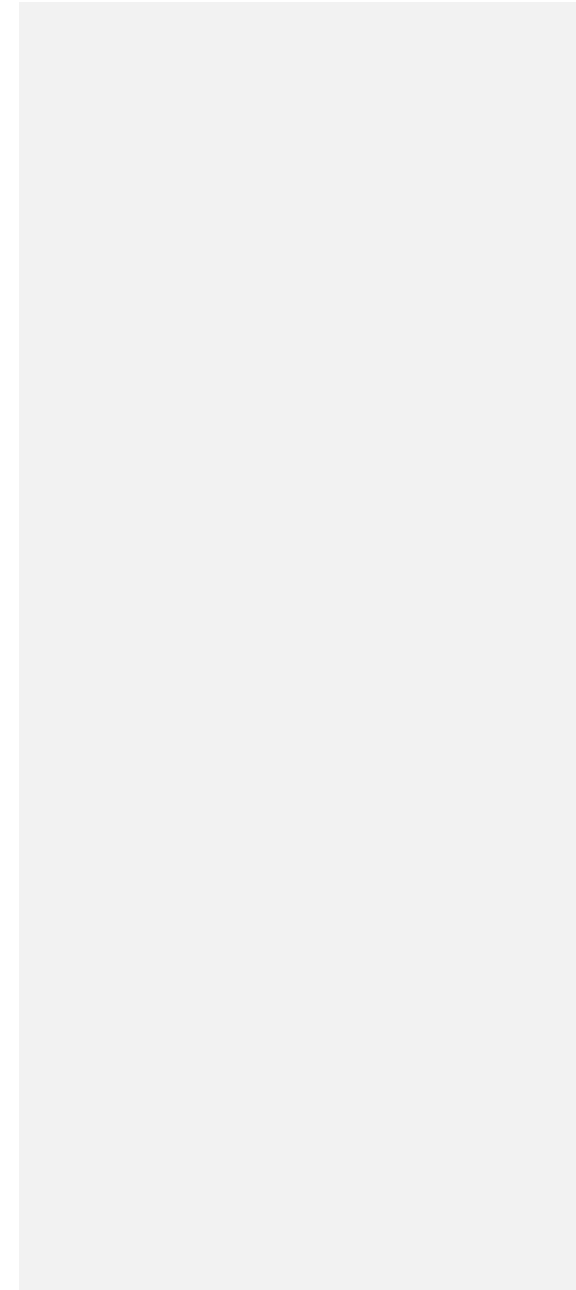
Dated:  
22 April 2026

Table 1				
Recommended Modification Number	Examiners Report Reference	Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan Reference	Proposed Modification	North Northamptonshire Council Decision/Reasoning
1	Para 7.13-7.17	Policy GU2: Access to the Countryside	<p><u>Recommended Modification 1:</u></p> <p>Modify the wording used in the second sentence of the policy to ensure that it properly relates to the development management process.</p>	Re-wording of Policy GU2 is supported.
2	Para 7.20	Policy GU3: Dark Night Skies	<p><u>Recommended Modification 2:</u></p> <p>It is recommended that a series of modifications are made to the wording used so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF and will allow NNC to implement its contents through the development management process.</p> <p>It is also recommended that the policy is applied in a proportionate way. This will avoid it having an onerous impact on minor and domestic proposals.</p> <p><b>Replace the policy with:</b></p> <p><b>‘As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should demonstrate that all relevant opportunities</b></p>	Re-wording of Policy GU3 is supported.

			<p><b>to reduce light pollution have been taken and should ensure that the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not negatively affected. Where the installation of lighting is unavoidable, necessary, and appropriate for the proposed development, light spillage and glare should be minimised, and any adverse impacts should be mitigated by control measures to reduce light pollution.'</b></p>	
3	Paras 7.24 to 7.25	Policy GU4	<p><u>Recommended Modification 3:</u> Two modifications are recommended to ensure that the policy has clarity required by the NPPF and to allow NNC to be able to apply it through the development management process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a revision to the wording of criterion d so that it applies in the plural as elsewhere in the policy; and</li> </ul>	Re-wording of Policy GU4 is supported.

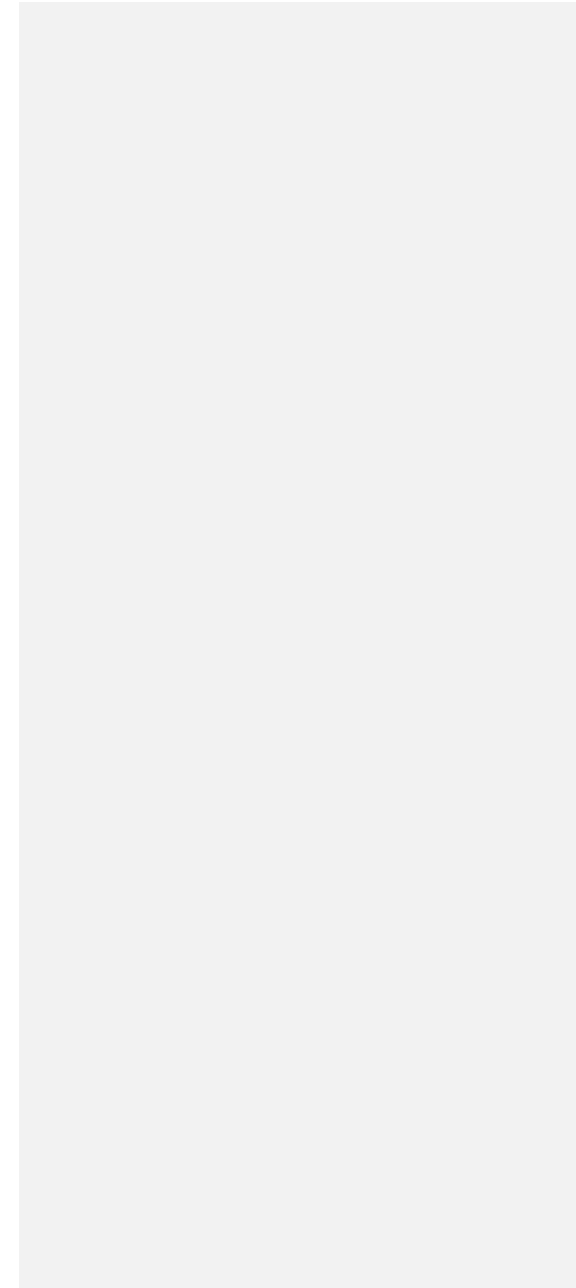
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that wind turbines or large-scale solar farms are acceptable as individual projects in addition to their potential cumulative effects.</li> </ul> <p><b>In criterion d of the first part of the policy replace 'It does not' with 'They do not'</b></p> <p><b>Replace the second part of the policy with:</b></p> <p><b>'Proposals for wind turbines or large-scale solar farms will not be supported unless they are sensitively located and their cumulative impact with similar developments is acceptable.'</b></p>	
4	Paras 7.33 to 7.34	Policy GU6: Ecology and Biodiversity	<p><u>Recommended Modification 4:</u> The reference to the Local Wildlife Sites (a) sits uncomfortably in the overall structure of the policy. It is recommended that it is weaved more naturally into the policy.</p>	Re-wording and amendment of Policy GU6 for clarity and application is supported.

			<p>It is also recommended that two other modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow it to be applied through the development management system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the inclusion of a positive element into the first part of the policy; and</li><li>• the inclusion of a proportionate element into the third part of the policy. This will acknowledge that some of the measures identified may not be appropriate for minor and domestic proposals.</li></ul> <p><b>Replace the policy with:</b></p> <p><b>'Development proposals should respond positively to and not harm the network of local ecological features and habitats as shown on Map 5 and the Policies Map.</b></p>	
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			<p><b>Development proposals should maintain and enhance local wildlife sites, and other ecological corridors and landscape features (such as watercourses, hedgerows, and treelines) and deliver an overall net gain for biodiversity.</b></p> <p><b>As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should integrate features such as bat boxes, bird boxes, and hedgehog highways to support biodiversity.'</b></p>	
5	Paras 7.39 to 7.40	Policy GU8: Trees and Hedgerows	<p><u>Recommended Modification 5:</u></p> <p>It is recommended that its order is reversed so that the submitted first sentence is repositioned to the end. GUPC agreed to this approach in its response to the clarification note.</p> <p>In doing so it is also recommended that there is refinement of the wording used</p>	Re-ordering and refinement to the wording of Policy GU8 is supported.

		<p>throughout the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF, and to allow the policy to be implemented through the development management process. The recommended modifications will also allow the restructured policy to have a more natural flow.</p> <p><b>Replace the policy with:</b></p> <p><b>'Development proposals should be designed to retain ancient trees, or hedgerows and trees of arboricultural and amenity value. Proposals should also consider the ongoing protection of affected trees, including appropriate root protection zones.</b></p> <p><b>Where it has been demonstrated that trees or hedgerows cannot be retained, native species replacements should be planted in locations where they would have the opportunity to grow to</b></p>	
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			<p>maturity, increase canopy cover, and contribute to the local ecosystem.</p> <p>Development proposals that would damage or result in the loss of ancient trees, or hedgerows or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value, will not be supported.'</p>	
6	Paras 7.43 to 7.44	Policy GU9: Local Heritage Assets	<p><u>Recommended Modification 6:</u> It is recommended that the policy element sits at the end and that the earlier part of the policy identifies the various assets. GUPC agreed to this approach in its response to the clarification note.</p> <p><b>Reorder the policy so that it reads:</b></p> <p><b>'The Plan identifies the following local heritage assets:</b></p> <p><b>[list a-c with details in a].</b></p> <p><b>The determination of planning</b></p>	Re-ordering of Policy GU9 is supported.

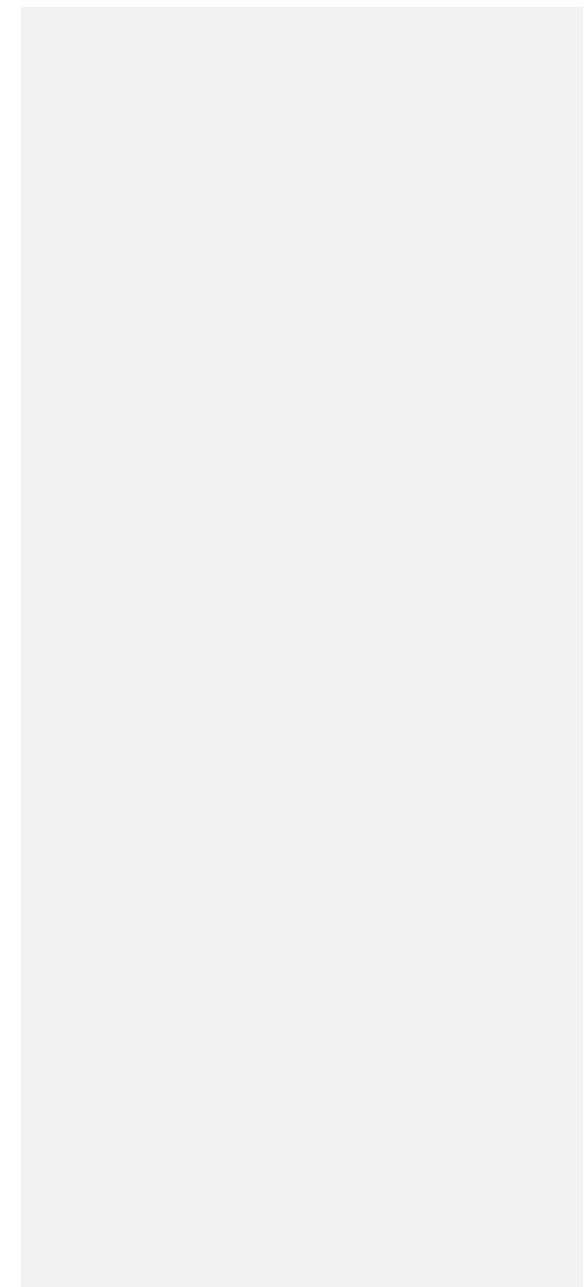
			<b>applications which would affect the features of local heritage interest will balance the need for the proposed development against the significance of the asset and the extent to which it will be harmed.'</b>	
7	Para 7.47	Policy GU10: Design	<u>Recommended Modification 7:</u> Correction to a typographical error in the second part of the policy. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the local delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.  <b>In the second part of the policy replace 'local' with 'location'.</b>	Agreed.
8	Para 7.53	Policy GU12: Housing Mix	<u>Recommended Modification 8:</u> A series of modifications are recommended to the wording used to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow NNC to apply its contents through the	Re-wording of Policy GU12 for clarity is supported.

			<p>development management process.</p> <p><b>Replace the policy with:</b></p> <p><b>'Development proposals for new dwellings should demonstrate how they will meet the housing needs of older households and/or the need for smaller homes for sale or rent. The development of housing with more than three bedrooms will only be supported where it is necessary to make the best use of redundant or disused rural buildings in accordance with Policy GU14 (Rural Housing).'</b></p>	
9	Para 7.56	Policy GU13: Rural Housing	<p><u>Recommended Modification 9:</u></p> <p>Modify the wording used in the opening element of the policy so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF and better applies to the development management process.</p> <p><b>Replace the opening element of the policy with: 'Proposals for housing in the countryside</b></p>	Modification to wording in Policy GU12 is supported.

			<b>will only be supported where they relate to the following matters:'</b>	
10	Paras 7.66 to 7.67	Policy GU17: Former Grafton Underwood Airfield	<p><u>Recommended Modification 10:</u> It is recommended that the third criterion is recast so that it is more applicable to the development management process (rather than simply requiring that the implications of traffic are assessed).</p> <p><b>Replace the final criterion with: 'C. Proposals can be accommodated with the local highway network.'</b></p>	The replacement wording for Policy GU17 is supported.
11	Para 7.70	Policy GU18: Timber Yard, Former Grafton Underwood Airfield	<p><u>Recommended Modification 11:</u> There is a slight disjoint between the first part of the policy and the opening element of the second part of the policy. It is recommended that the opening element of the second part of the policy is recast accordingly.</p> <p><b>Replace the opening element of the second part of the policy with: 'Development proposals</b></p>	The replacement wording for Policy GU18 is supported.

			for these uses should meet the following criteria:'	
12	Paras 7.72 to 7.74	Policy GU19: Parking	<p><u>Recommended Modification 12:</u> The examiner sought advice from GUPC about the extent to which it has a specific purpose given that the broader issue is addressed in the Northamptonshire Parking Standards. In its response to the clarification note it commented that:</p> <p><i>'Residents living in the village are heavily reliant on the private car for their journeys, in light of the lack of public transport and the lack of village services and facilities. The 2021 census identifies car ownership in Grafton Underwood as 87.9%, compared to 76.5% across England. Levels of on-street parking was raised as a concern through the public consultation</i></p>	Expansion and text replacement to Policy GU19 is supported.

			<p><i>undertaken by the parish Council in May 2022. High levels of car ownership and reliance on the private car for journeys in turn creates a parking demand. Parking issues are identified in the supporting text and the policy seeks to reinforce existing parking standards in the County and not exacerbate the parking issues faced in the village. In addition, the parking standards were adopted after the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.'</i></p> <p>While the examiner understands the concerns raised by GUPC, the first part of the policy simply restates existing local policy. On this basis it is recommended that the policy's focus shifts to the element about the use of permeable surface for new parking areas. Nevertheless, it is recommended that the supporting text is expanded so that it</p>	
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			<p>highlights the importance of the Northamptonshire Parking Standards.</p> <p><b>Replace the policy with:</b>  <b>'Wherever practicable, permeable surfaces should be used in the design of new car parking areas to reduce water run-off.'</b></p> <p><i>At the end of paragraph 11.3 add:  'The Parish Council recognises the importance of these Standards, and will expect development proposals to provide the necessary parking spaces.'</i></p>	
13	Para 7.76	General	<p><u>Other modifications:</u>  Other changes are recommended to the general text and maps may be required elsewhere in the Plan because of the recommended modifications to the policies. It will be appropriate for NNC and GUPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary</p>	Agreed.

			consequential changes to the general text. Accordingly,  <i>Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies.</i>	
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