

Ecton Neighbourhood
Development Plan
2016-2031
Referendum Version



Ecton Parish Council

May 2021

Foreword

Welcome to the Referendum version of the Ecton Neighbourhood Plan.

The Localism Act 2011 gave parishes the ability to be able to exercise more control over future development in their communities by creating their own Neighbourhood Plan.

Ecton Parish Council took up this challenge to put in place a land-use framework and vision for the Parish to 2031. Our vision is that Ecton will retain its distinctive village character whilst the built and natural heritage of the Parish, including its valued countryside, will be retained and enhanced.

Although the Parish Council has overall responsibility for producing the Neighbourhood Plan it formed a Steering Group consisting of members of the Parish Council and the local community to undertake this task. Throughout the process there has been an open invitation for members of the local community to join the Steering Group and a number of parishioners have actively participated. The Neighbourhood Plan has undergone several iterations with amendments made following consultation with the local community, statutory bodies and other consultees; it also incorporates modifications made by the Borough Council following an independent examination held in 2020.

I would like to thank the members of the Steering Group (past and present) and Parish Council; they are all volunteers who have generously devoted considerable time and effort to develop the Neighbourhood Plan for the benefit of our community. I would also like to thank everybody who responded to the consultation undertaken over several years; this has enabled us to test the level of support for particular policies and make changes where appropriate to do so. I am also appreciative of the assistance provided by the Borough Council and the Locality neighbourhood plan support programme for providing grant funding for the project.

We are now at the referendum stage. This is the important last step in the process. Residents on the electoral roll for Ecton will be given the opportunity at the referendum to vote on whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan should be used in determining planning applications in the Parish. Provided that a simple majority of votes (over 50%) are cast in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan it will form part of the statutory development plan and applications for planning permission must then be determined in accordance with its policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Sally Jones
Chairman of the Parish Council

The Parish Council and Steering Group would like to thank Mrs Sheila Ingram, widow of Mr Rodney Ingram, for allowing the use of Rodney's sketch of Ecton on the front cover.

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1. Introduction

What is a neighbourhood plan?

1.1 The 2011 Localism Act has provided local communities with the opportunity to prepare a 'neighbourhood plan' to enable people to have a greater say about the use and development of land and buildings in their area. While a neighbourhood plan cannot be used to prevent development, it can provide the local community with an opportunity to promote the type of development that it needs and wants while protecting the distinctive character of the area. The policies in a neighbourhood plan are used to determine planning applications and planning appeals.

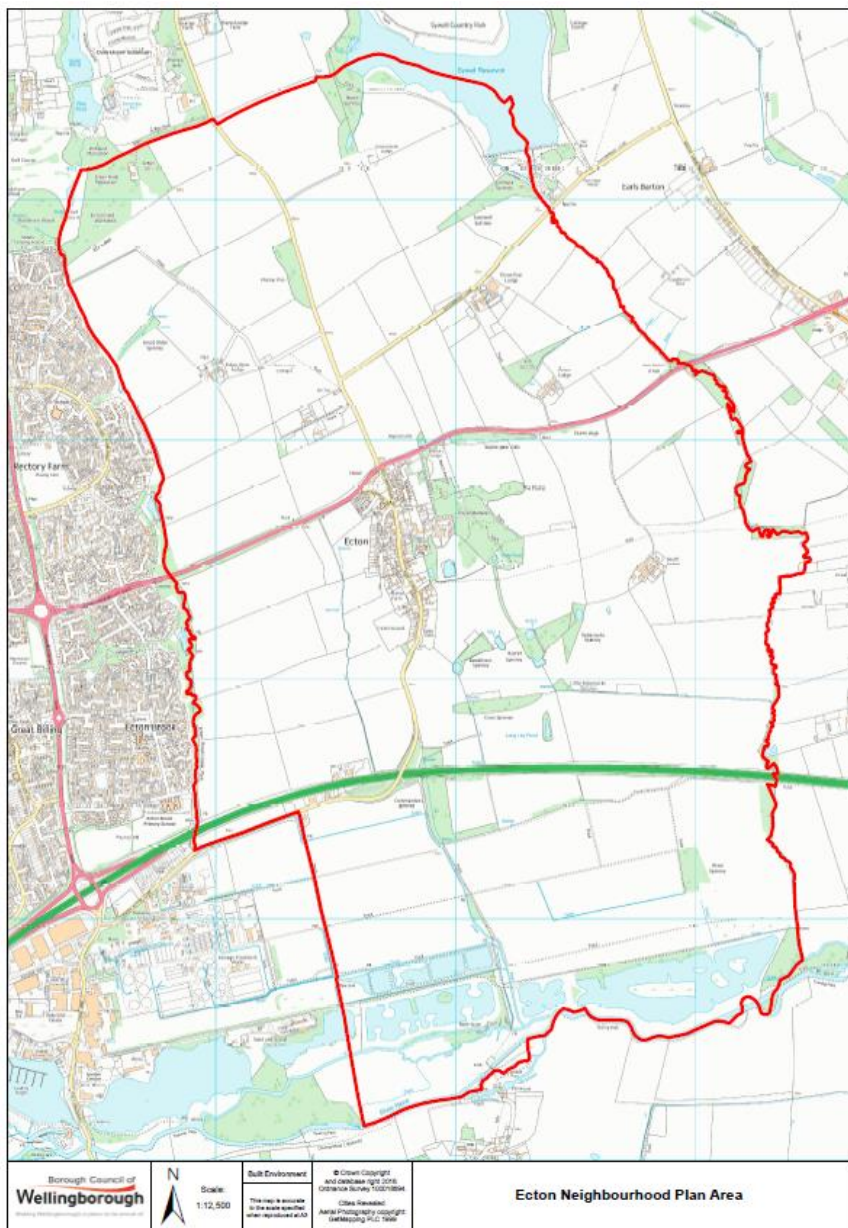


Figure 1: The Neighbourhood Plan Area

The Ecton Neighbourhood Plan

1.2 Preparation of the Ecton Neighbourhood Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan) is the responsibility of Ecton Parish Council. In 2012 it resolved to prepare a plan to provide our community with an opportunity to influence the future quality of development. The Neighbourhood Plan provides a shared vision of our neighbourhood and includes a number of objectives and planning policies to help realise the vision.

1.3 The Parish Council formed a Steering Group of members of the Parish Council and the local community to progress the Neighbourhood Plan. Throughout the process there has been an open invitation for members of the local community to join the Steering Group and a number of parishioners have actively participated.

1.4 The Steering Group used various sources of background information (referred to as the evidence base) to produce the Neighbourhood Plan. The evidence base is available on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the 'Ecton Village' website at: www.ectonvillage.co.uk.

1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan has undergone several iterations with amendments based on consultation with the local community, statutory bodies and other consultees as detailed in the Consultation Statement¹ it also incorporates modifications made by the Borough Council following an independent examination held in 2020.

The Neighbourhood Area and the Neighbourhood Plan period

1.6 The Parish was designated as a 'neighbourhood area' by the Borough Council of Wellingborough on 15th December 2014. The extent of the Neighbourhood Area (the Plan Area) is shown in Figure 1. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the 15 year period from 2016 to 2031. It will, however, be prudent to review the Neighbourhood Plan periodically to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date.

2. The planning context and status of the Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Although the local community has significant scope to determine the content of the Neighbourhood Plan, the policies are required by legislation to meet a set of ‘basic conditions’. To meet these conditions the Neighbourhood Plan must:

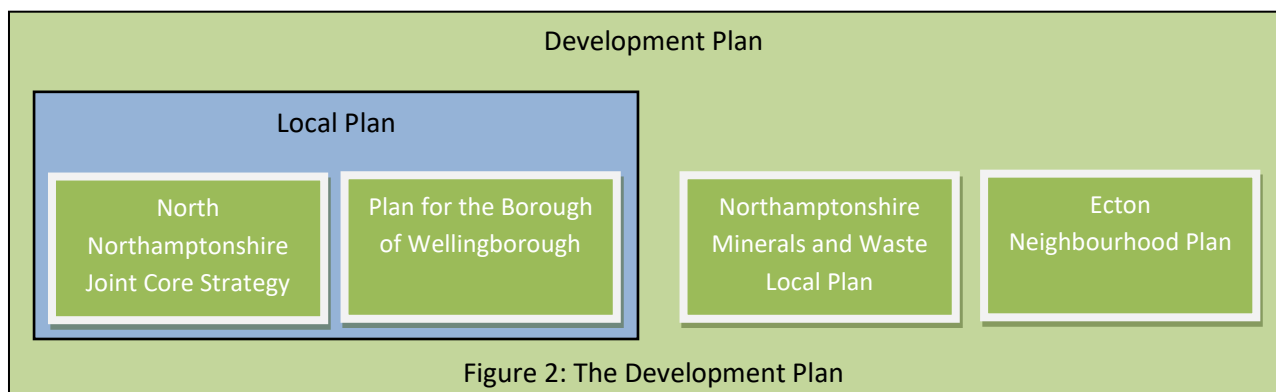
- i. **Have appropriate regard to national planning policy and guidance.** This is primarily set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- ii. **Contribute to sustainable development.** The NPPF indicates that plans should help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy while supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities and contributing to the protection and enhancement of our natural, built and historic environment.
- iii. **Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area.** The ‘development plan’ for the Borough of Wellingborough, of which Ecton is a part, is comprised of the following (see also Figure 2 below):
 - the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS);
 - the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough (PBW); and
 - the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
- iv. **Be compatible with European Union obligations.** EU directives require consideration to be given to the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on the environment and on European Sites recognised under the EU Habitats Directive. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special

Protection Area (SPA) (see paragraph 3.14) is a designated European Site. Whilst no part of the SPA is within the Plan Area, parts of Ecton Parish are within established consultation zonesⁱⁱ where some types of development could have a significant negative effect on the SPA.

2.2 Compliance with the basic conditions and other legal requirements was tested through examination by an independent examiner. Both the examiner and the Borough Council concluded that, subject to a number of modifications, the Neighbourhood Plan would meet the basic conditions. The required modifications have subsequently been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.3 Preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has provided the local community with an opportunity to influence the policy framework used to make decisions on planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan has now reached the referendum stage. The referendum, expected to take place in May 2021, provides the local community with an opportunity to vote on the Neighbourhood Plan. Provided that a simple majority are in favour, the Neighbourhood Plan will be brought into force. This means that it will then form part of the statutory development plan for the area and planning applications must be determined in accordance with its policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2.4 Figure 2, below, illustrates which plans will form the Development Plan for Ecton in the event that the Neighbourhood Plan is brought into force.



3. Ecton Today

Introduction

3.1 This section provides a brief description of economic, social and environmental factors which may influence development in Ecton during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan. These factors include the location and size of Ecton together with its built and natural heritage; its population and household characteristics; its links to other settlements; and the local facilities and services that are available to the local population.

Location

3.2 The Neighbourhood Area (the Plan Area) of 882 hectares has the same boundary as the Parish of

Ecton and is located within the Borough of Wellingborough. The village lies at the heart of the Plan area and is home to most of the population of 466 people. Beyond the village the land is largely in agricultural use with a scattering of farms and some pockets of woodland.

3.3 The Plan Area, shown in Figure 1, adjoins Northampton to the west whilst the southern boundary is marked by the River Nene. To the east lie the parish and village of Earls Barton whilst to the north the area adjoins the rural parishes of Sywell, Mears Ashby and Overstone.

3.4 The location of Ecton is highlighted in Figure 3. The village lies to the north of the A45 trunk road which links to Northampton and the M1 to the west and to Wellingborough and the A14 (Thrapston) to the east. Directly to the north of the village the A4500 provides a further route to Northampton, Wellingborough and the nearby villages of Earls Barton and Wilby to the east.

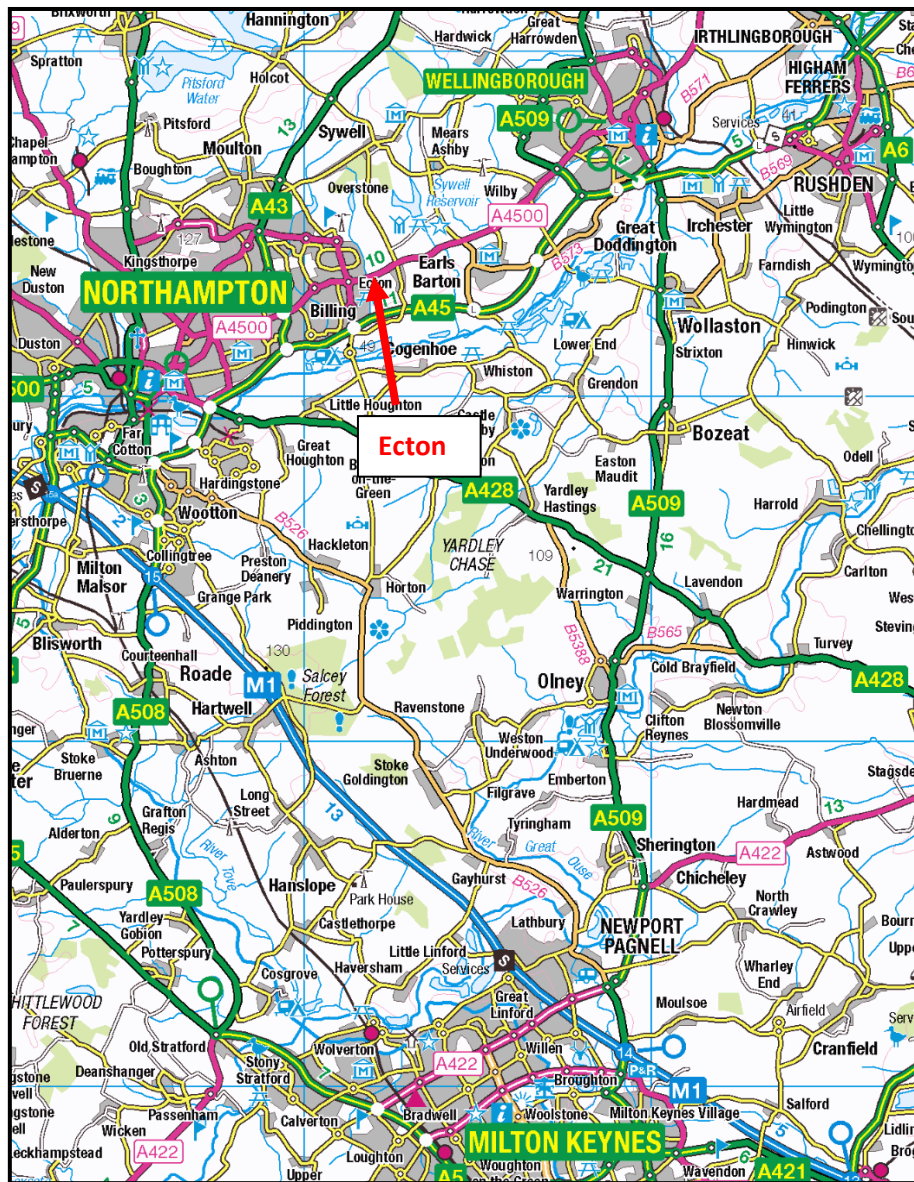


Figure 3: The location of Ecton

History

3.5 A large number of prehistoric and Roman sites have been found in Ecton whilst evidence, including finds from a scheduled monument site off Sywell Lane (see Figure 4), indicates a thriving pottery industry during Roman times. There is evidence of a continuing occupation during Anglo-Saxon times with the name Ecton said to derive from a settlement founded by a Saxon named Ecca. By the time of the Domesday Book (1086) Ecton was a relatively large settlement of 41 people. Over the course of the following centuries there were several owners of the manor, including Henry De Ferrers, the Duchy of Lancaster and the Catesby family, before the estate was sold to the Isted family in 1712.

Ambrose Isted, who inherited the estate in 1731, redeveloped the Hall, demolished property in Little Ecton (to the east of the Hall) to extend the park, undertook extensive landscaping and established 5 lodge farms.

3.6 The church of St Mary Magdalene, largely constructed in the 13th and 14th centuries but with later additions, is the oldest surviving building in Ecton. Within the churchyard are buried relatives of Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman, scientist, inventor and writer. However, the majority of listed buildings in Ecton date from the 17th and 18th centuries. By 1801 the population had reached 474 and continued to rise until reaching a peak of 631 in 1851. The 19th century witnessed not only housing and population growth but also saw the construction of a number of facilities including chapels, the village school and a 'Reading and Recreation Institute'.



The church of St Mary Magdalene

3.7 The agricultural depression of the late 19th century and the better wages offered by the growing footwear industry in Northamptonshire saw the migration of agricultural labourers to the nearby towns. The population gradually declined and work at the Hall came to an end in the 1950's when it was abandoned by its owner. However, more recent improvements in connectivity have enabled people to live in rural areas whilst either commuting to work or working from home. As a consequence, the population of Ecton has stabilised in more recent times whilst the number of dwellings, which has included the conversion of the Hall and outbuildings into apartments, gradually increased from 140 in 1951 to 221 by 2011.

Landscape

3.8 The Plan Area forms part of the 'Ecton and Earls Barton Slopes' landscape character areaⁱⁱⁱ where valley slopes run parallel to the River Nene and are dissected by valleys draining the uplands southwards into the river. The landscape is characterised by medium to large arable fields with areas of pasture on the edge of the village and a significant area of broadleaved woodland associated with the Ecton Hall parkland.

3.9 The village of Ecton is located on the mid slopes of the Nene valley and along a minor road aligned perpendicular to the valley. Part of the village is visible in views from the west and the church tower of St Mary Magdalene forms a significant feature in the landscape. Woodland areas associated with the Hall and its former grounds, including 'The Wilderness', screen the village from the east. The woodland forms an integral part of the character of the village and provides an attractive backdrop, framing the village in views from the west. Between the village and the river the A45 is a major feature of the valley landscape.

3.10 North of the A4500, which is located directly to the north of the village, the landscape is characterised by scattered farms and dwellings whilst the main feature of this area is Sywell Reservoir which forms part of a Country Park and is partly within Ecton Parish. The reservoir is fringed by woodlands, belts of poplar trees, sheep grazed pastures and arable farmland.

3.11 The underlying geology of the Plan Area incorporates both the upper lias clays and terrace gravels of the valley side as well as the alluvial deposits along the valley floor of the River Nene. However, the village and much of the land north of the A4500 lies largely on a bed of Northamptonshire sandstone resulting in the emergence of a number of springs to the south of the village where the sandstone meets the impervious clay beneath.

The historic environment

3.12 The majority of the listed buildings within the Plan Area are located within the village of Ecton where a significant amount of development is within a designated Conservation Area. Within the Plan Area there are more than 40 listings including the Grade I church of Saint Mary Magdalene and the Grade II*

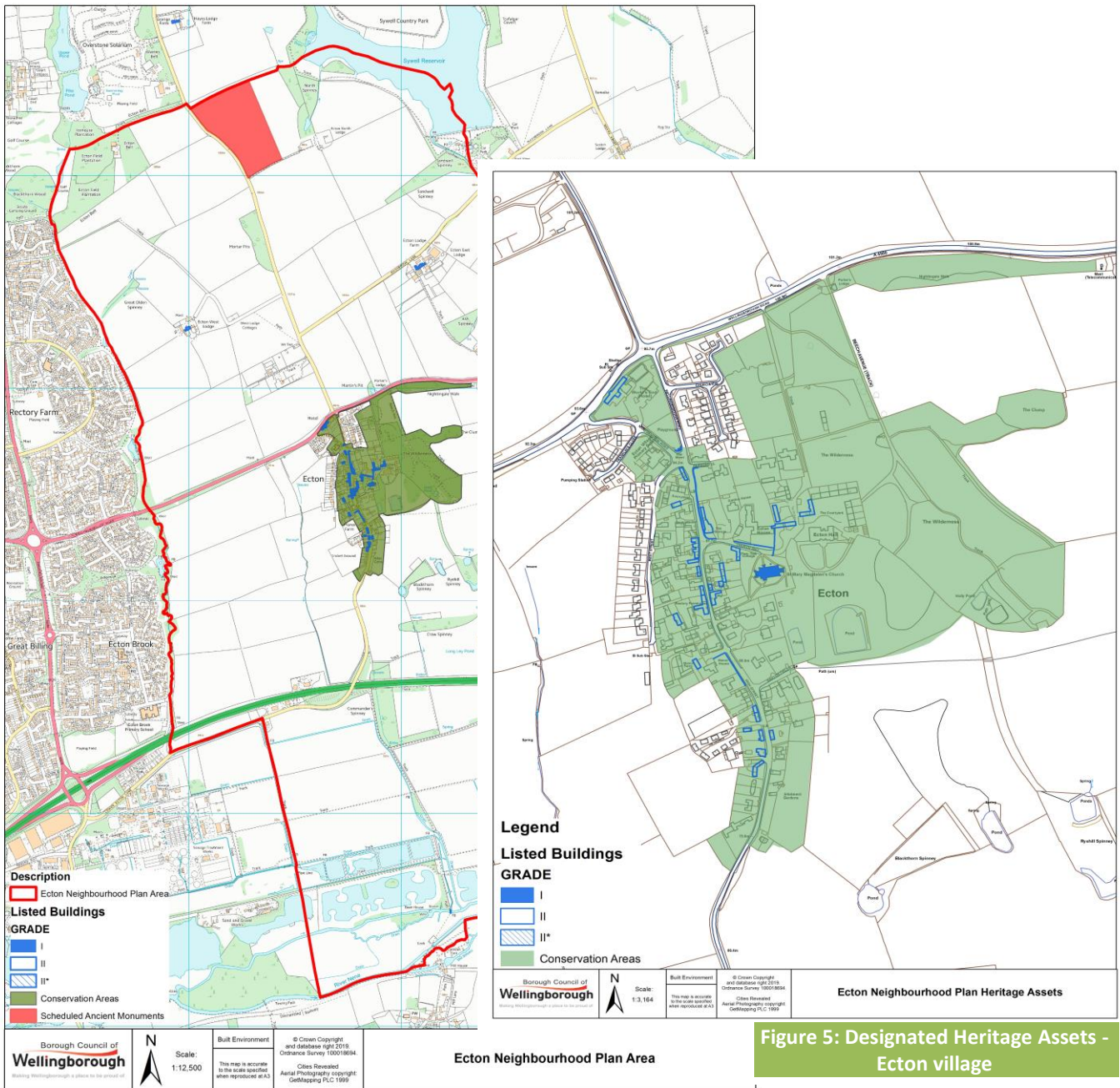


Figure 4: Designated Heritage Assets – Neighbourhood Plan Area

Figure 5: Designated Heritage Assets - Ecton village

buildings of Ecton Hall; the associated Summerhouse, laundry and game larder; and Ecton House and Manor House. In addition, there is a scheduled monument off Sywell Lane which is the location of a former Romano-British settlement where a number of pottery kilns have been discovered.

3.13 The location of the scheduled monument, the Conservation Area and listed buildings and structures^{iv} in the Plan Area are shown in Figure 4. Figure 5 highlights the designated heritage assets within the village of Ecton. Further details of the scheduled monument and listed buildings can be viewed on Historic England’s website at:

historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/

Further information on the Conservation Area is available on the Borough Council’s website at:

www.wellingborough.gov.uk

In addition, the Historic Environment Record, maintained by Northamptonshire County Council, identifies areas of undesigned archaeological interest within the Plan Area and can be viewed at: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/Pages/mapping.aspx

Biodiversity

3.14 The local countryside includes a number of assets of ecological importance which are predominantly centred on the River Nene and areas of woodland. The Nene and its tributaries were designated as a Nature Improvement Area (NIA) by the Government in 2012 to help promote the sustainable use of natural resources and the restoration, creation and linking of wildlife habitats. At the centre of the NIA lies the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, which is of international importance for a wide variety of over-wintering birds. The SPA extends for about 35 kilometres along the River Nene and contains 20 separate blocks of land and water

fragmented by various features. Whilst no part of the SPA is located within the Plan Area, parts of the Parish are within established consultation zones where specified types of development could have a significant negative effect on the SPA (see paragraph 2.1).

3.15 Figure 6 illustrates the extent of the NIA within the Plan Area and identifies sites which have been designated at a local level and form an important part of Northamptonshire’s ecological network. These include Local Wildlife Sites, which are of county importance, and Potential Wildlife Sites which are possibly of higher biodiversity value than the general countryside, although this has not been confirmed through ecological survey.

Population and households^v

3.16 Between 2001 and 2011 the population of the Plan Area grew by 6.2% (7.1%) from 439 to 466. At the end of this period there were 211 households with the average size being 2.2 (2.4) persons. Approximately 32.7% (30.2%) of households consist of one person and a further 37.4% (34.2%) are two person households.

3.17 During the decade the proportion of the population aged 0-15 remained fairly static, although by 2011 the figure of 14.7% (18.9%) was below the national average. Approximately 21.3% (16.4%) of residents are aged 65 and over and 26.5% (20.5%) of households consist solely of people in this age group. With population growth during the decade being most marked in the 45-59 age group and approximately 55% (42%) of residents now aged 45 and over, it is anticipated that during the Plan period the needs of the ageing population, both locally and nationally, will increase pressure on services such as health and social care and on the nature of housing that is required to meet their needs.

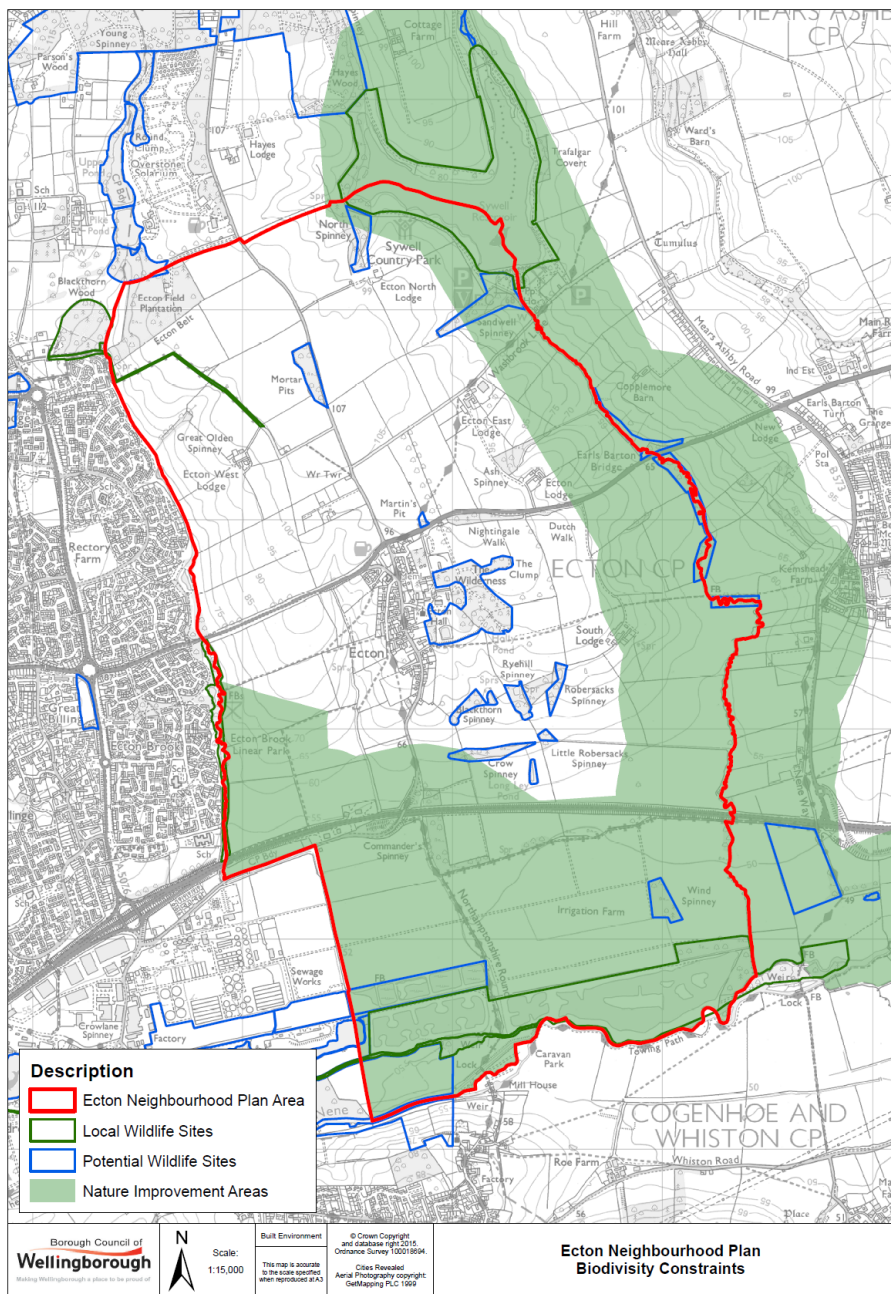


Figure 6: Designated Areas of Biodiversity

Housing

3.18 Approximately 73.9% (63.4%) of housing in the Plan Area is owner occupied whilst 12.3% (17.7%) is social rented and 13.8% (18.1%) is either privately rented or provided rent free. There are no (0.8%) shared ownership properties in Ecton. Dwellings in the Plan Area are likely to have more bedrooms and be in a higher Council tax band than nationally. Approximately 30.8% (39.9%) of homes have two or fewer bedrooms whilst 25.1% (19%) have 4 or more bedrooms and 58.4% (33.8%) are in Council tax band D or above. Dwellings are also more likely to be detached with 39.4% (22.3%) in this category and 26.7% (46.6%) being either terraced or flats.

3.19 A housing needs survey, undertaken in 2017 by the Borough Council with support from the Parish Council, concluded that there was a need for the following dwelling mix in Ecton:-

- market housing: 1x3 bed house and 1x2 bed house or bungalow;
- shared ownership: 1x1 bed property; and
- social/affordable rented housing: 1x1 bed older person dwelling or supported housing.

Business and employment

3.20 Ecton does not have a dedicated employment area and the majority of the population travel beyond the Plan Area to work. However, evidence from internet listings and local knowledge indicates that there are a number of small businesses in Ecton with 17.1% (10.4%) of the working age population of the West Ward of the Borough (which includes Ecton) being self-employed. cursory evidence further suggests that many self-employed people in Ecton work from home and in the service sector. Unemployment in the West Ward is low with 1% (2.8%) of the population aged 16 to 64 claiming out-of-work benefits at September 2019^{vi}.

3.21 Approximately 33.2% (27.4%) of Ecton residents aged 16 and over have a level 4 qualification, which includes a degree, a professional qualification or a level 4-5 NVQ, and 20.4% (10.9%) are described as 'managers, directors and senior officials'. Whilst 19% have no formal qualifications, this figure is below the national average of 22.5%.

Transport and travel to work

3.22 Car ownership levels are relatively high in the Area with 52.6% (32.1%) of households having two or more vehicles. However, 12.3% (25.8%) of households do not have a car or van. Car use dominates as a transport mode with 74.2% (57%) of the working population of Ecton travelling by car. A further 9.2% (5.4%) work from home. Bus operators provide a service approximately every half hour between Northampton and Wellingborough between Monday and Saturday with a less frequent service on a Sunday. However, only 1.3% of the working population use the bus to travel to work.

3.23 The nearest railway stations at Wellingborough and Northampton are approximately 7 miles from Ecton. Wellingborough is on the Midland Main Line between London and Sheffield with an average journey time to London of about 50 minutes. Northampton station is served by London Midland services southbound to London and northbound to Birmingham New Street. Travel times from Northampton to both London and Birmingham are approximately one hour.

Local Services and facilities

3.24 Ecton offers a limited range of local services and facilities which include a village hall, a primary school with a pre-school facility, a church, a children's play area, allotments and two public houses (one of which incorporates a hotel, bar, restaurant and children's play area). In addition, Ecton village is served by superfast broadband.

3.25 The village hall provides an ideal facility for community events and is well used by residents and visitors. The management committee aims to organise a community event once a month providing social activities for all ages. There are also regular clubs and classes promoting well-being, such as bowls, Pilates and art. The pub similarly offers a venue for music, a popular quiz, and darts and skittles teams. The village also has a thriving youth club and an older persons group. All of these events and groups contribute to a strong, sociable and vibrant community.



The Three Horseshoes Public House

There were 16 children at the pre-school in 2016 of whom 25% were from Ecton. The primary school has capacity for 105 children. There were 82 children at the school in 2016 of whom only 11% lived locally. Current forecasts provided by the Local Education Authority suggest that whilst the number of children at the school is likely to increase slightly over the period to 2021, there will continue to be sufficient capacity to accommodate anticipated growth. Children from Ecton generally attend secondary school in either Wellingborough or Northampton.

3.26 The Ecton Acorns pre-school, which is based at the primary school, has a capacity of 20 places.

4. Key Issues and the Vision and Objectives

The Vision

Ecton will retain its distinctive village character whilst the built and natural heritage of the Parish, including its valued countryside, will be retained and enhanced. Ecton will feel safe and will continue to be a vibrant, thriving and inclusive rural community.

4.1 The vision outlined above, together with the objectives listed in the table on page 12, forms the foundation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The vision provides a short description of what Ecton should be like in 2031 whilst the objectives set out what we want to achieve to help make the vision a reality.

4.2 The vision and objectives have been drawn up after careful consideration of the following questions:

- what do we want to achieve during the Neighbourhood Plan period?;
- What do we want Ecton to look like in the future?; and
- what land use and development challenges may need to be addressed?

4.3 To answer these questions, evidence was gathered from a range of sources including:

- consultation with the local community, businesses and organisations;
- the Development Plan and associated evidence base documents;
- other baseline information outlined in section 3 and listed in the 'evidence base' which is available on the website at <http://www.ectonvillage.co.uk>; and

- discussions at meetings of the Ecton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

4.4 The evidence raised a number of issues for the Neighbourhood Plan to address:

- What type of development is needed in Ecton?
- How much development should be permitted and where?
- How can the separate identity of Ecton village be retained?
- What are the distinctive characteristics and features of Ecton that development should respect?
- Which open spaces should be protected from development and do they meet Government criteria for the designation of Local Green Space?
- Where are there key views and vistas that should be protected?
- Which community facilities should be protected?
- What are the key highway and road safety issues facing Ecton?
- Is Ecton a suitable location for a community based renewable energy project?

4.5 It is evident from consultation that the local community values the distinctive characteristics that give Ecton a strong sense of place and identity. These strengths are highlighted in the following description which was widely endorsed in responses to the 2013

questionnaire referred to in the Consultation Statement (see paragraph 1.5):

‘Ecton is situated on a hill, built around a church and an historic hall, all set in green fields and mature trees. Ecton is a sociable village with lots of community activities across all age groups using village assets such as the village hall, the church, the school and the two pubs. Partly in a conservation area, the character of the village is typified by houses built of traditional ironstone and more recent brick houses. The village celebrates a historical connection to the ancestors of Benjamin Franklin.’

4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives seek to maintain and, where possible, enhance the important features and characteristics of Ecton whilst providing some opportunities for development that can add to the sustainability of the local community. The vision and objectives were

widely supported by residents who responded to the 2016 questionnaire referred to in the Consultation Statement (see paragraph 1.5). The objectives are grouped around the following topics:

The objectives are grouped around the following topics:

- housing;
- community facilities and local green space;
- the historic environment;
- landscape character and the natural environment;
- highways;
- fibre optic broadband

4.7 The following table lists the objectives, the policies and any supporting actions designed to contribute towards the achievement of each objective. The policies and supporting actions are set out in section 5.

Topic	Plan Objective	Related policies and supporting actions
Housing	To limit development at Ecton village to small scale infill development and ‘rural exceptions’ housing.	Policies in the JCS largely restrict housing to infill and rural exception sites. However, Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that proposals are sensitively designed
	To ensure that housing meets the needs of the local community.	Policy 2 and Policy 3
Community facilities and local green space	To safeguard and, where possible, improve the provision of community facilities and services.	Policy 4 and Policy 5 Supporting Action 1
	To protect and enhance important areas of open space, both public and private.	Policy 6
The historic environment	To ensure that the design of new development maintains and, where possible, enhances the historic environment of Ecton.	Policy 7, Policy 8 and Supporting Action 2
	To protect and enhance important areas of open space, both public and private.	Policy 6 and Policy 7
	To safeguard important views and features of landscape importance.	Policy 7 and Policy 10
Landscape character and the natural environment	To maintain the separate identity of Ecton village.	Policy 9
	To safeguard important views and features of landscape importance.	Policy 7 and Policy 10
	To conserve and, where possible, enhance biodiversity and the landscape character and setting of Ecton.	Policy 11
Highways	To support and encourage a safe highway network.	Policy 12 and Supporting Action 3
Fibre optic broadband	To support and encourage the availability of communications technology.	Policy 13

5. Planning policies and proposals

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Section 4 sets out the overall vision for Ecton while this section of the Neighbourhood Plan contains the policies to support and help deliver the vision.

5.1.2 However, it is not the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan to include all land use planning policies for Ecton. Rather, the Neighbourhood Plan contains a series of policies which provide a distinct, local application of policies in the wider Development Plan where this will assist the community in achieving its vision for Ecton. Accordingly, proposals for development must be judged against all relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and against all other relevant policies of the Development Plan.

5.1.3 The policies in this section are grouped under the topic headings listed at paragraph 4.6. Objectives

relevant to each topic are included in a box with a green background. The Neighbourhood Plan policies are contained within a box with a blue background and are accompanied by a reasoned justification to explain the purpose and reason for the policy.

5.1.4 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan also includes:

- a Policies Map (see pages 27-28) to identify land to which an area specific policy applies. For example, it illustrates areas designated as Local Green Space in Policy 6 (Local Green Space) of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- ‘supporting actions’ which the Parish Council will pursue in order to help realise the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. The supporting actions are contained within a box with a pink background.

5.2 Housing

Objectives

To limit development at Ecton village to small scale infill development and ‘rural exceptions’ housing.

To ensure that housing meets the needs of the local community.

Introduction

5.2.1 Policy 11 (The Network of Urban and Rural Areas) of the JCS largely limits new housing in Ecton to small scale infilling on sites within the village and ‘rural exception’ schemes intended to secure affordable housing on land adjacent to the village. Policy SS1 (Villages) of the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough establishes a ‘Village Boundary’ to interpret whether a site is within or adjacent to the village of Ecton.

5.2.2 It is explained in the JCS (at paragraph 5.17) that infilling refers to the development of vacant and

under-developed land within the main built-up areas of the village on land which is bounded by existing

built curtilages on at least two sides, such as the filling in of a small gap in an otherwise substantially built-up frontage.

5.2.3 The JCS also enables additional land to be allocated in Ecton for housing, where agreed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, consultation responses in 2013 indicated that such provision would not be supported by the local community and the Neighbourhood Plan does not therefore allocate land for housing.

5.2.4 The housing section of the Neighbourhood Plan complements the JCS by adding detail to policies concerned with residential amenity, dwelling size and rural exception housing.

Residential Amenity

5.2.5 Policy 8 (North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles) of the JCS highlights the need to give careful consideration to the likely impact that

development can have on the amenities of future occupiers of the new dwellings and neighbouring properties and on the wider area in terms of noise, other forms of pollution, loss of light and overlooking.



Example of infill development, High St

5.2.6 The following policy complements and supports the JCS through the inclusion of additional criteria to ensure that off-street car parking and refuse and recycling storage facilities do not detract from the street scene.



High St – an example of recent development in Ecton

Policy 1 – Residential amenity

To be supported, proposals for residential development must include:

1. car parking spaces in accordance with the standards of provision adopted by the Highway Authority; and
2. refuse and recycling storage facilities.

All car parking spaces and refuse and recycling storage facilities must be located so as not to have an adverse visual impact on the street scene.

Dwelling size

5.2.7 The JCS supports a mix of dwelling sizes and tenures to include homes that will help to meet the need for affordable housing; enable older households to down-size; provide for the growing number of smaller households; and address any gaps in provision.

5.2.8 The Neighbourhood Plan complements the policies of the JCS by placing greater emphasis on both the type of housing to be supported in Ecton (Policy 2) and on the occupation of housing to be provided as part of any rural exception scheme (Policy 3).

5.2.9 At a Borough-wide level the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (SHMA)^{vii} predicts that the need for small dwellings in North Northamptonshire will grow significantly as a consequence of first time buyers trying to get onto the property ladder and as a result of an increase in both households of retirement age and small households.

5.2.10 Due to benefit restrictions related to under occupancy it is likely that affordable housing will be limited to the minimum requirement. However, in the market sector there is likely to be a preference by consumers and providers for an additional bedroom. Research by the New Policy Institute^{viii} indicates that older people want at least two reasonable sized bedrooms and that many (especially couples) prefer to have three bedrooms. The SHMA concludes that the main requirement will be for single bedroom dwellings followed by three bedroom properties.

5.2.11 Evidence from the 2017 Ecton Housing Needs Survey^{ix}, summarised at paragraph 3.19 of the Neighbourhood Plan, further indicates that current, though limited need for housing in Ecton, is for small dwellings. Additionally, some residents aged over 55 have expressed interest in downsizing to housing more appropriate to their needs. Responses to the 2016 questionnaire further reinforce local support for smaller dwellings to develop a more balanced housing stock.

5.2.12 Policy 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan places particular emphasis on the provision of small dwellings to deliver relatively affordable homes; to provide opportunities for older residents wishing to downsize; and to help redress the housing imbalance in Ecton where over 25% of homes have 4 or more

bedrooms compared to a national average of approximately 19%.

Policy 2 - Dwelling size

1. To be supported, proposals for new housing must demonstrate how they address the most up-to-date published evidence of housing needs in Ecton.
2. The provision of dwellings with 3 or fewer bedrooms will be supported. Alternative provision will only be supported where up-to-date evidence of need in Ecton is demonstrated.

Rural exception sites

5.2.13 Affordable housing, which is defined in the glossary to the NPPF, includes housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing can be provided on 'rural exception' sites of a small scale located on land where planning permission would not usually be granted for housing, for example agricultural land next to the village boundary. The NPPF indicates that opportunities to bring forward such sites to meet an identified need should be supported.

5.2.14 Policy 13 (Rural Exceptions) of the JCS and Policy H6 (Single Plot Exception Sites for Self-Build) of the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough focus on the scale, location and type of dwellings that should be provided on rural exception sites and on ensuring that the homes remain available and affordable in perpetuity to meet local needs. The Neighbourhood Plan complements these policies, focusing primarily on ensuring that people with a strong local connection to Ecton are given priority access to the affordable housing.

5.2.15 Applicants on the housing waiting list are placed in one of five bands (A to E) set out in the Housing Allocation Policy of the Borough Council. Persons in band 'A' have the highest priority need while those in band 'E' are adequately housed but have a local connection to the Parish as defined in the Housing Allocations Policy. This latter group may, for example, include young people living with their parents because they are unable to afford market housing. Where a rural exception site is developed in Ecton, priority will be given to people with a local connection. This will ensure, for example, that

applicants in band 'E' with a local connection are given priority over those in greater need (i.e. in a higher band) but without a local connection to Ecton. For the purposes of Policy 3 (Rural exception sites) of the Neighbourhood Plan, the definition of 'local connection' shall be as defined in the 2018 Housing Allocation Policy^x of the Borough Council or any later revision of that policy.

5.2.16 A legal agreement should be used to ensure that the housing remains available in perpetuity to meet a local need for affordable housing. This should also grant the nomination rights to the Borough Council, its successor or another appropriate body able to ensure that people with a local connection to Ecton are afforded the greatest priority

Policy 3 - Rural exception sites

1. Development proposals for affordable housing in accordance with Policy 13 (Rural Exceptions) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy H6 (Single Plot Exception Sites for Self-Build) of the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough will be supported.
2. Nomination agreements, secured where necessary through the use of a legal agreement, will be used to ensure that priority access to affordable housing is given to people in need of affordable housing with a local connection to the Neighbourhood Area.
3. Planning obligations will be used to ensure that the affordable housing is made available in perpetuity for people with a local connection to the Neighbourhood Area.

5.3 Community facilities and local green space

Objectives

To safeguard and, where possible, improve the provision of community facilities and services.

To protect and enhance important areas of open space, both public and private.

Retaining community facilities

5.3.1 Uses within use classes A1 to A5 and D1 and D2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) are, for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, defined as community facilities. Within Ecton these include the village hall, the public houses and restaurant, the church and the primary school.

5.3.2 Whilst recent decades have witnessed a decline in the availability of services in Ecton, including the closure of the last village shop, the remaining community facilities make a significant contribution to the vitality, viability and quality of village life and provide an important focal point for social interaction. They can offer an important service, particularly for those who do not have access to a car, and can reduce the need to travel. In some instances they also provide local employment opportunities.

5.3.3 Both the NPPF and JCS indicate that valued community facilities should be retained unless they are no longer viable; no longer needed for a community use; or are to be relocated. All of the residents who responded to the 2016 questionnaire recognised the need for a policy to support the retention of the remaining facilities in the village.

5.3.4 Planning permission, however, is not always required to change the use of a building or land and this may restrict the opportunity to secure the continued use of a facility threatened with closure. Notwithstanding this, Policy 4 and the following text explain how the Neighbourhood Plan will contribute towards the objective of safeguarding and improving community facilities and services, where possible.

5.3.5 Where the grant of planning permission would result in the loss of a community facility it will be necessary to demonstrate that there is no

reasonable prospect of securing either the continued use or an alternative community use of the land or building.

5.3.6 The following policy complements Policy 7 (Community Services and Facilities) of the JCS by providing greater clarity regarding the level of evidence required to demonstrate that there is no prospect of a continued community use and the preferred location where it is proposed to provide a replacement facility. The 'Village Boundary', which is referred to in the policy and is used to interpret whether sites are within or adjoining the village, is defined in the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough and is identified on the Policies Map – Village Inset.



The village hall – a vital community facility

Policy 4 - The protection of community facilities

Proposals to redevelop or change the use of an existing community facility or land or buildings last used as a community facility will only be supported where one of the following conditions is met:

1. A replacement facility of sufficient size, layout and quality to compensate for the loss of the existing facility is to be provided on an alternative site within the Village Boundary identified on the Policies Map – Village Inset. Exceptionally, the replacement facility will be permitted adjacent to the Village Boundary where there is a clear local need for the facility to be relocated and a more central site within the village is not available; or

2. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the existing use is no longer economically viable and that there is no reasonable prospect of securing either a continuation of the existing use or an alternative community use. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the property has been satisfactorily marketed by a commercial property agent for a period of at least 12 months at a price which reflects an independent professional valuation and it is verified by the agent that no interest in acquisition has been expressed.

5.3.7 The Community Right to Bid, introduced in the Localism Act 2011, provides additional protection against the loss of a community asset. It allows the Parish Council and community groups to nominate land and buildings for listing by the Borough Council as an ‘Asset of Community Value’ (ACV) where the facility has recently been, or is presently used, to further the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational or sporting interests of the local community.

5.3.8 When an ACV comes up for sale, the Parish Council and community groups are given a six month period to develop a proposal and bid for the asset. However, the owner is not required to sell to the community and may choose to sell the asset on the open market following due consideration of the community bid. Where planning permission is required to change the use of an ACV the local planning authority may determine that the listing is a material consideration and a significant factor in the determination of a planning application.

Supporting Action 1 - Assets of Community Value.

Ecton Parish Council will nominate buildings or land for inclusion on the Assets of Community Value register held by the Borough Council, or its successor, where justified. This will be particularly important where there are no other facilities in Ecton which provide adequate, alternative provision of a similar nature.

The provision of new community facilities

5.3.9 The NPPF indicates that planning policy should promote the provision of community facilities.

The JCS aims to focus facilities intended to serve the Borough as a whole within the town of Wellingborough whilst villages, including Ecton, should provide for the day to day needs of the local community.

5.3.10 Policy 5 enables the development of additional community facilities in Ecton in order to diversify and enhance the range and choice available to local residents whilst also ensuring that the facilities are conveniently accessible and will not have a detrimental impact on the local environment.

Policy 5 - The provision of new community facilities

Proposals that diversify or enhance the range of community facilities will be supported provided that the development is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle.

Local green space

5.3.11 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. The NPPF enables land which is demonstrably special to the local community to be designated as ‘Local Green Space’, thereby ruling out new development other than in very special circumstances.

5.3.12 Sites may be designated as Local Green Space for a wide range of reasons including their visual amenity, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or their richness of wildlife. The NPPF indicates that the designation must not be applied to an extensive tract of land. However, the land does not need to be publicly accessible; although it must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.

5.3.13 The sites listed in Policy 6 are designated as Local Green Space on the Policies Map (see page 29) for the following reasons:

1. *Play area at the junction of Wellingborough Road and Northampton Road:* The play area is located within immediate proximity to the local community and is important not only for its recreational value but also because it forms a valuable area of open space and backdrop to

the war memorial at the southern end of the site.



Play area - Northampton Rd/Wellingborough Rd junction

- 2 *Grounds of St Mary Magdalene's Church:* The churchyard is located within immediate proximity of the local community and is valued not only as an area of tranquillity within the village but also because it enhances the setting of the Grade I listed church. Its historic importance is further strengthened by the gravestones, including the listed headstones which honour the memory of relatives of Benjamin Franklin.
- 3 *Allotment land to the east of High Street:* The walled allotment gardens are owned by the Ecton Estate and were originally allocated to its tenants. The allotments are within close proximity of the local community and continue to be enjoyed by a number of residents for their recreational value, their tranquillity and the pleasant views across the adjoining countryside.

- 4 *Land to the rear of the village hall:* The land is in close proximity to the local community and is used for village events and by residents using the hall. In addition, it is valued for the imposing views that it provides across the Nene valley and adjoining countryside.

Policy 6 - Local Green Space

The following areas identified on the Policies Map are designated as Local Green Space and will be protected from development due to their particular local significance or community value:

1. The play area at the junction of Northampton Road and Wellingborough Road;
2. The grounds of St Mary Magdalene's Church, Church Way;
3. The allotment land east of High Street; and
4. Land to the rear of the village hall, High Street.

Development on land designated as Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the development will not detract from the special character of the site.

5.4 The historic environment

Objectives

To ensure that the design of new development maintains and, where possible, enhances the historic environment of Ecton.

To protect and enhance important areas of open space, both public and private.

To safeguard important views and features of landscape importance.

Introduction

5.4.1 Ecton has a distinctive historic character with attractive buildings and features, including many heritage assets set within a rural landscape. The historic environment is strongly valued by the local community not only as a cultural asset but also as an important resource which contributes to an attractive environment for people wishing to live, work or invest in the area.

5.4.2 Elements of the historic environment that hold significance are termed 'heritage assets' and can either be 'designated' or 'non-designated'.

Designated assets have statutory status and within the Neighbourhood Plan area include a scheduled monument, listed buildings and the Ecton Conservation Area.



World's End, Northampton Rd - a Grade II Listed Building

5.4.3 A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place area or landscape of lesser significance identified by the local planning authority as having a degree of heritage interest which merits consideration in determining planning applications.

5.4.4 A core planning principle of the NPPF is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. Policy 2 (historic environment) of the JCS provides for the conservation and, where possible, enhancement of the distinctive historic environment including its heritage assets and their settings and key views and vistas of heritage assets. The policy further recognises the need for proposals to complement their surrounding historic environment in terms of form, scale, design and materials.

Ecton Conservation Area

5.4.5 In recognition of its special architectural or historic interest, much of the village is located within a designated Conservation Area (see paragraphs 3.12 – 3.13). This is a key part of Ecton and must be carefully managed in order to conserve and enhance its character.

5.4.6 The Conservation Area was extended in 2018. As part of the review a Conservation Area Appraisal^{xi} was prepared and adopted by the Borough Council. The Appraisal illustrates the distinctive elements and characteristics that should be considered in the design of new buildings and extensions and has influenced the design policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.4.7 The following policy seeks to protect and enhance the Conservation Area not by stifling all change but by managing new development to ensure that it respects and reflects the character of the area which is derived not only from the buildings but also from street patterns, building lines, spaces, trees, roofscapes, vistas and other features.

Policy 7 – The Conservation Area

To be supported, development proposals, including extensions, must demonstrate consideration of the impact on the significance of the Ecton Conservation Area, in particular with respect to the following positive and locally distinctive characteristics identified in the Ecton Conservation Area Appraisal:

1. the existing street pattern and proximity of buildings to the highway; the scale, height, orientation and juxtaposition of existing buildings; and the importance of open spaces around buildings;
2. the use of traditional materials and architectural features including building and roofing materials and fenestration and chimney stack details;
3. the traditional use of pitched roofs and the varied roofscape within the Conservation Area;
4. the need to retain and replicate traditional stone walls within the public realm and the railings which are a distinctive feature associated with Ecton Hall and its former curtilage;
5. visually important trees;
6. the setting of heritage assets; and
7. the opportunity, where relevant, to remove existing, unsightly and inappropriate features in order to enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

Standard designs which fail to capture or complement the distinctive and traditional character of the Conservation Area will not be permitted.

Contemporary designs need not imitate earlier architectural periods or styles but must be of a high quality and sympathetic to the form and scale of surrounding development.

Non-designated heritage assets

5.4.8 The local planning authority has responsibility for preparing a local list of non-designated heritage assets and has adopted a supplementary planning document^{xiii} which establishes selection criteria and a process for determining if an asset should be included on the local list. Additionally, the Historic Environment Record provides an important source of information on archaeological sites and the historic environment.

5.4.9 The process of identifying non-designated heritage assets will provide an opportunity for the community and the local authorities to work in partnership. Determining the location and significance of the assets will provide clarity on the desirability of their conservation and enhancement and will assist in the development of a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment of Ecton.



The war memorial. An example of a structure which is not listed but should be assessed for inclusion on a local list of heritage assets.

Supporting Action 2 - Non designated heritage assets

Ecton Parish Council will seek to work with the local authorities, the local community and other parties to identify non-designated heritage assets to be included on the Local List of Heritage Assets.

5.4.10 In accordance with the NPPF, where a heritage asset is affected by development it will be

necessary for an applicant to submit a report which assesses the impact on the significance and setting of the asset. Where the site includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, a desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation should form part of the planning application.

5.4.11 Where a non-designated heritage asset is affected by development proposals, every effort should be made to conserve and, where possible, enhance the asset and its setting. Extensions and alterations should be designed sympathetically. Where an asset is proposed for demolition or removal on economic grounds, a marketing report explaining the measures taken to sell or let it at a market price may provide acceptable evidence. The aim of marketing is to reach potential buyers who may be willing to find a use for the heritage asset and secure its conservation. Whilst there is no obligation on an owner to sell the asset, the existence of a potential purchaser will be taken to indicate that redundancy has not been demonstrated.

5.4.12 Where demolition of a building or structure is warranted, the NPPF provides for the recording of the heritage asset, the submission of this information for inclusion as part of the Historic Environment Record and for reasonable measures to be taken to ensure that the new development will take place following demolition of the heritage asset. The Borough Council has advised that, where possible, it would prefer these requirements to be the subject of a planning condition rather than a legal agreement.

Policy 8 - Non-designated heritage assets

1. Development which affects a non-designated heritage asset or its setting shall:
 - a. establish and take account of the individual significance of the asset; and
 - b. ensure that, where possible, the conservation of the asset and its setting in terms of quality of design and layout (scale, form, bulk, height, character and features) and materials is not compromised and is enhanced where possible.
2. Where development involves the loss of the whole or a material part of the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, the proposals must demonstrate that:

- a. all reasonable efforts have been made to either sustain the existing use, find a viable alternative use, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the asset; and
 - b. the benefits of permitting the development outweigh the scale of any harm or loss.
3. Where planning permission is granted for development that will result in the loss of the whole or a material part of the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, planning

- conditions or a legal agreement will be used to ensure:
- a. the recording of the significance of the heritage asset and the subsequent deposit of the evidence with the Historic Environment Record and of any archives with a local museum; and
 - b. that any loss does not take place until after the new development has commenced or, where this is not possible, immediately before it commences.

5.5 Landscape character and the natural environment.

Objectives

To maintain the separate identity of Ecton village.

To safeguard important views and features of landscape importance.

To conserve and, where possible, enhance biodiversity and the landscape character and setting of Ecton.

Introduction

5.5.1 The rural environment of Ecton forms an intrinsic part of the character of the Parish and provides opportunities for informal recreation. The NPPF indicates that the planning system should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it. Similarly, the JCS supports the conservation and enhancement of the character and qualities of the local landscape including features of landscape importance, important views and vistas, and the landscape setting and separate identities of settlements.

5.5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan complements the NPPF and JCS. It includes a specific policy to protect the distinct identity of Ecton; it identifies a number of important views and vistas; and it provides additional detail to protect and enhance natural features and secure appropriate landscaping of development sites.

The separate identity of Ecton village.

5.5.3 The village of Ecton is located approximately 0.5 miles to the east of Northampton and much of the intervening countryside is rural and undeveloped in character. There is pressure from the development industry to extend beyond the Ecton Brook, which currently forms a firm, eastern boundary to Northampton.

5.5.4 Whilst the inspector who held the examination into the North Northamptonshire JCS^{xiii} concluded that development beyond the Ecton Brook is not necessary, he recognised that proposals may need to be considered in the long term to help meet the county's needs. However, he stated that this would be a matter for a review of either the North Northamptonshire JCS or West Northamptonshire JCS to address in due course. Further explanation in the North Northamptonshire JCS indicates that it is not necessary for North Northamptonshire to identify land for housing or other development specifically related to meeting the needs of Northampton before 2029. However, 'for the period post 2029 options outside of the West Northamptonshire boundary area may need to be tested alongside others for meeting Northampton's longer term development needs'.

5.5.5 The land between Ecton village and Northampton forms part of the Ecton and Earls Barton Slopes landscape character area as defined in the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment (see paragraph 3.8). The JCS (at para 3.24) indicates that the Character Assessment should

be used to ensure that the diversity of the North Northamptonshire landscape is respected, retained and, where possible, enhanced.

5.5.6 Policies 3 and 11 of the JCS highlight the need for the landscape setting of settlements, their individual and distinct character and their separate identity to be protected. Additionally, local residents who responded to the 2016 questionnaire recognised the important role that the countryside has to play in protecting the village setting and preventing coalescence with Northampton.

5.5.7 The Environmental Character Assessment further highlights the vulnerability of the Rolling Ironstone Valley Slopes, including the Ecton and Earls Barton Slopes, to development pressure and concludes that, when considering proposals for development, it will be important to give careful consideration to the integration of development with the local landform as well as to the wider setting and to the relationship with existing built areas.

5.5.8 In recognition of the desire to protect the character of Ecton village an area ‘sensitive to coalescence with Northampton’ has been identified on the Policies Map (see page 27). The purpose of this designation is not to preclude development that accords with the strategic policies of a Local Plan but to highlight the need for the landscape impacts arising from the scale, location and design of development to be carefully considered to ensure that the landscape setting of Ecton village, its individual and distinct character and its separate identity are protected.

Policy 9 – Maintaining the separate identity of Ecton village.

Within the area designated on the Policies Map as ‘sensitive to coalescence,’ proposals for development will not be supported if, individually or cumulatively, they will:
harm the landscape setting and distinct identity of the village of Ecton; or
undermine the visual or physical separation of Ecton village from Northampton; or
result in the coalescence of Ecton village and Northampton.

Important views and vistas

5.5.9 The landscape setting of the village on the mid slopes of the Nene valley provides extensive, locally valued views from the public rights of way network and public highways within the village and wider Plan Area.

5.5.10 Important views and vistas within the Plan Area include those of the distinct and positive characteristics and features of the countryside (see paragraphs 3.8 – 3.13) and of heritage assets within the village which, in some instances, are visible within the wider landscape. Overall, these views add significantly to the character of the Plan Area and enjoyment of the public rights of way network.



View of Ecton Hall from the Ecton to Earls Barton public footpath (TE1)

5.5.11 Paragraphs 5.5.12 to 5.5.16 (below) describe a number of key views within and around the village. However, these views are not intended to form an exhaustive list and do not include the outlying areas of the Plan Area where there are numerous panoramic and attractive views across open countryside.

5.5.12 To the west of the village the network of public footpaths provides attractive views across the Nene Valley and towards the settlement. Prominent within the views of the village are the church tower and mature trees, including the woodland areas to the east of the settlement. The trees and church tower provide strong, vertical elements within the landscape. The public footpath on the east side of the village offers glimpses of the frontage of Ecton Hall and extensive views across its former parkland.



View of Ecton village from the west

5.5.13 Within the village, the winding nature of High Street and the significant number of buildings and walls which either abut the highway or are in close proximity to it, creates a series of curtailed but distinctive vistas which generally lead the eye along the road and form part of the special character of the Conservation Area. The views widen out at the north end of High Street where the war memorial acts as a focal point within the village and where several roads converge.

5.5.14 Church Way represents the heart of the village from which Ecton has evolved and includes several key buildings including the grade I listed church and the grade II* Ecton Hall and Ecton House. The low walls along parts of the street frontage and the railings in the vicinity of Ecton Hall enable a number of these significant buildings and their settings to be viewed from the public highway.

5.5.15 Important viewpoints along High Street and Church Way are also identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.



View of the church tower from West Street



View of the church tower from High Street

5.5.16 There are also various points within the village from which the church tower can be viewed or glimpsed. Examples are highlighted in the above photographs.

5.5.17 Policy 10 identifies key public views and vistas within the Plan Area. Where proposals may impact on an important public view, an application should be accompanied by evidence both to illustrate the impact of the design, scale, height and massing of the development on existing public views and to indicate how such views could be enhanced.

Policy 10 – Important public views and vistas

To be supported, development proposals must demonstrate that their layout will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the following important views:

- views of Ecton village, including adjoining areas of woodland and the Church Tower, seen from locations on public footpaths reference TE2, TE3, TE4 and TE5 to the west of Ecton identified on the Policies Map;
- 2. views of Ecton Hall and the adjoining former parkland seen from locations along the public footpath reference TE1 identified on the Policies Map;
- 3. views along High Street, including views of the War Memorial;
- 4. views along Church Way; and
- 5. views of the Church Tower from publicly accessible locations within the village boundary.

Natural features and the landscaping of development sites

5.5.18 Trees, hedgerows and water features are significant to the overall landscape quality of Ecton and are examples of natural features which help to maintain and enhance the visual attractiveness of the area and often provide important habitats for wildlife. Such features may also define routes and views whilst trees and hedgerows can also screen out noise or unsightly development; provide shelter; have a positive impact on air quality and reduce the predicted effects of a warming climate.

5.5.19 Some of these natural features have protection under the Hedgerow Regulations, Tree Preservation Orders or by being situated in the Ecton Conservation Area. However, other controls, such as planning conditions, restrictive covenants and Forestry Commission felling restrictions may apply. Details of Tree Preservation Orders within the Plan Area can be viewed on the interactive mapping section of the Borough Council’s website at: http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/a_to_z/l



View from Northampton Road. Trees are significant to the overall landscape quality of Ecton

5.5.20 The following policy makes provision for the retention and enhancement of natural features of nature conservation and/or amenity value and for landscape works in specified circumstances. Planning conditions will be used to secure the implementation of landscaping schemes and the conservation of natural features of importance (including their protection during construction of the development) or replacement, where appropriate. Further useful guidance on landscape design and the protection of trees on development sites is set out in a ‘Trees and Landscape Supplementary Planning Document’^{xiv} whilst the ‘Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for Northamptonshire’^{xv} provides guidance on biodiversity issues.



Trees at the junction of High Street and Barton Fields

Policy 11 – Natural features and landscape works

To be supported, proposals for development shall:

1. Incorporate existing natural features of nature conservation and/or amenity importance and protect them from damage, destruction or deterioration in quality; and
2. Incorporate appropriate landscaping works where required to soften the visual impact of the development and/or enhance existing natural features of importance.

Exceptionally, where development would result in the unavoidable loss of a natural feature of importance which is outweighed by the benefit of the development, the grant of planning permission will, where possible, be conditioned to require the replacement of the natural feature.

5.6 Highways

Objectives

To support and encourage a safe highway network.

Supporting Action 3 – Highway safety

Ecton Parish Council will seek to work with the local community, the highway authority, the Police and other parties to support suitable measures to improve highway safety within Ecton.

Introduction

5.6.1 Road safety in Ecton has been identified as an issue by many residents concerned by the perceived speed of vehicles travelling through the village and the dangers of on-street parking in the vicinity of the school at the start and end of the day. Similarly, concerns have been expressed about the speed of traffic along the A4500 and the need to cross the road to reach the bus stop.



Ecton primary school - Illustrating parking at the end of the school day

5.6.2 Responsibility for assessing and, where appropriate, undertaking highway improvements, including the introduction of speed restrictions, is the responsibility of the highway authority rather than a matter for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council has informed the highway authority of the issues raised. Following an investigation the County Council, working in partnership with the Police, has concluded that there is no compelling evidence to support a lower speed limit within the village or along the A4500 at the present time. The following action signals the desire of the Parish Council to support suitable measures to improve highway safety.

Car parking and electric vehicle charging

5.6.3 With respect to new development, the JCS emphasises the need to create a safe and pleasant environment through a series of measures including prioritising the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users; resisting developments that would prejudice highway safety; and ensuring that development has a satisfactory means of access and includes provision for parking, servicing and manoeuvring in accordance with adopted standards.

5.6.4 Car ownership levels in Ecton are high (see paragraph 3.22), reflecting both the rural location and limited availability of public transport. In addition, the level of off-road parking is inadequate in parts of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan complements the policies of the JCS through the inclusion of measures to prevent the loss of off-street parking and to ensure that, where planning permission is required, extensions and alterations for additional bedrooms include the corresponding number of parking spaces for the size of property.

5.6.5 Clarification regarding adopted parking standards was issued by the County Council to the Borough Council in 2017. The clarification indicates that a double garage can be counted as one parking space while a single garage can be included as a parking space where external storage, such as a shed, is to be provided. Where it is necessary to count a proposed garage as a parking space in order to ensure compliance with adopted parking standards it will be appropriate to include a condition to prevent its future conversion for use as an additional room without planning permission.

5.6.6 The following policy also has regard to the Government's aspiration that, by 2040, every new car will be an ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV). Electric

vehicles offer significant benefits in terms of air quality and carbon reduction and the NPPF indicates that applications for development should be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations. Evidence indicates that most private owners of electric vehicles charge them overnight, at home, and currently have a strong preference for doing this rather than using public or workplace charging^{xvi}.

Policy 12 – Car parking and electric vehicle charging

1. Where development, including extensions and alterations, would result in the loss of existing garage and/or parking spaces, planning permission will only be granted where adequate off-street parking is provided to meet the adopted parking standards of the Highway Authority.

2. Where it is necessary to count a proposed garage as a parking space to ensure compliance with the adopted parking standards of the Highway Authority, permission will be subject to a condition preventing its future conversion for use as an extension to a dwelling without planning permission.
3. Where development includes proposals for off-street parking or a garage, safe and accessible provision shall be made for the charging of electric vehicles.

5.7 Superfast broadband

Objectives

To support and encourage the availability of communications technology.

5.7.1 A high-speed broadband network is of vital importance to Ecton. It will not only support working from home but will provide opportunities to improve business performance and reduce the need to travel. It will also enhance access to an increasing number of on-line applications and services and help to reduce social exclusion.

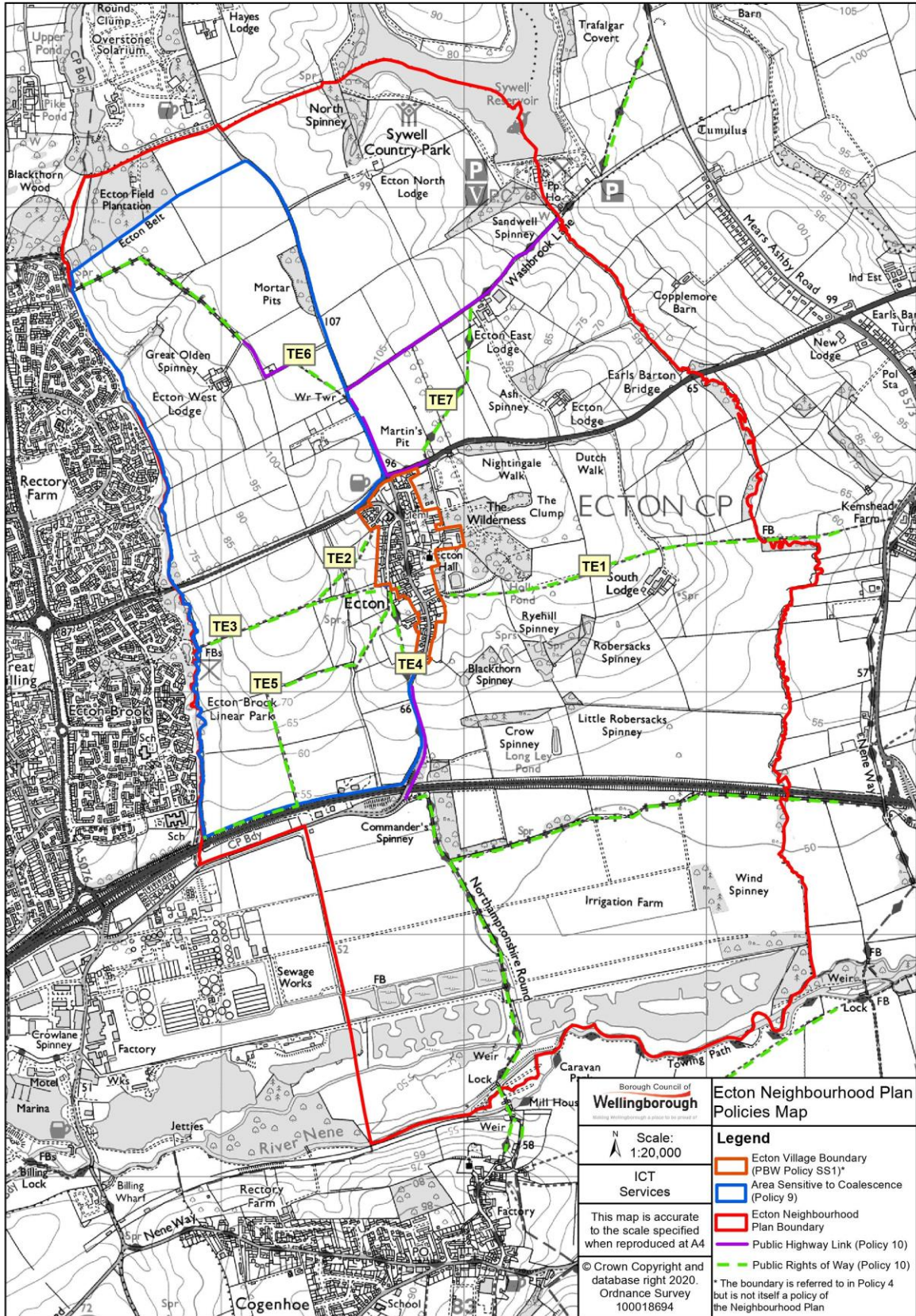
5.7.2 The NPPF and JCS support the provision of high-speed broadband. The County Council’s ‘Superfast Northamptonshire’ project aims to secure access to superfast broadband of 24Mbps and above to most premises in the County by 2021. The plans are largely based on the use of fibre-optic technology between the exchange and a cabinet located close to the community and use of the existing copper network between the cabinet and premises. However, the project also aims to secure access to ultrafast broadband of 100Mbps and above to 65% of premises by 2021.

5.7.3 Taking fibre all the way to the premises rather than to the cabinet is more costly. However, ‘fibre to the premises’ can support much higher speeds of up to 1Gbps and demand for such technology is expected to increase as a consequence. The following policy therefore aims to secure the provision of suitable ducting to enable new residential and commercial development to be readily served by fibre to the premises at a future date.

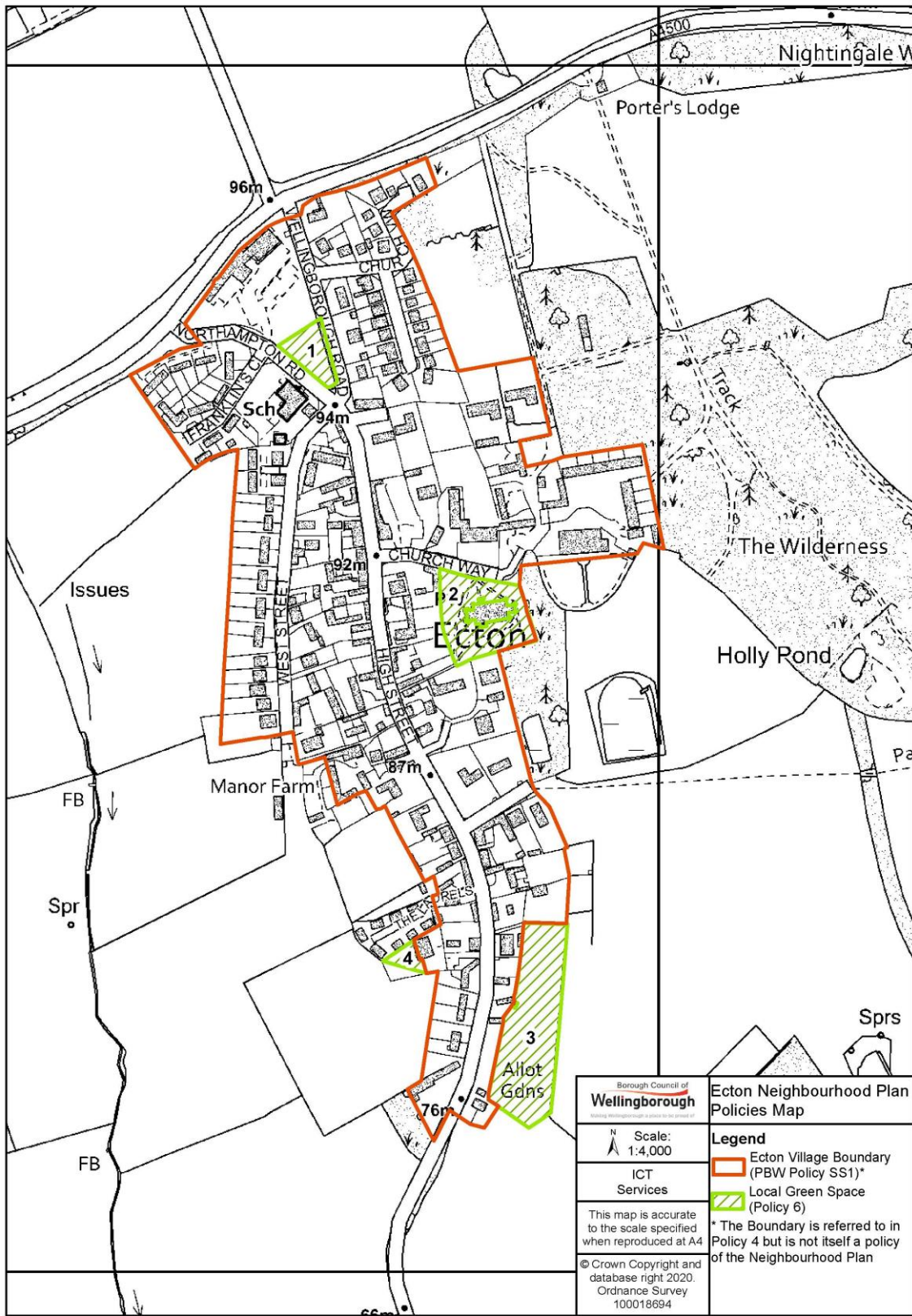
Policy 13 - Fibre to the premises

Planning permission for new dwellings or commercial development will be subject to a condition requiring the provision of ducting that can support the provision of fibre to the individual premises unless it can be demonstrated that such provision would not be practical or viable.

Ecton Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map



Ecton Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map – Village Inset



Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Affordable Housing:

Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the definitions in the glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Asset of Community Value (ACV):

Land or property of importance to a local community which is subject to additional protection under the Localism Act. Voluntary and community organisations can nominate an asset to be included on their local authority's register of ACVs. The owner of an ACV must inform the local authority if they wish to sell the asset. If a group wants to buy the asset it can trigger a moratorium for six months to give it an opportunity to raise the money to purchase the asset. The owner does not have to sell to a community group, the ACV listing only improves the chances of community groups being able to purchase by providing more time to raise funds.

Conservation Area:

An area valued for its special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. Areas are designated by the local planning authority. Designation provides the local planning authority with extra powers to control works and demolition of buildings to protect or improve the character or appearance of the area. The Ecton Conservation Area was extended in 2018.

Conservation Area Character Appraisal:

A published document defining the special architectural or historic interest that warrants an area being designated as a Conservation Area.

Development Plan:

A document setting out the policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in an area. This includes adopted Local Plans and 'made' neighbourhood plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Heritage Asset:

A heritage asset can be either 'designated' or 'non-designated'. Within the Plan Area sites designated under legislation include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area. Non-designated heritage assets are identified by the local planning authority. This category includes buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets.

Historic Environment Record (HER):

Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use. HERs contain details of local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes and are regularly updated. This information is usually held in a database with a digital mapping system.

Infill development

The development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings.

JCS:

See North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Listed Building:

A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II.

Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest - only 2.5% of listed buildings in England are Grade I.
 Grade II* buildings are of more than special interest - only 5.5% of listed buildings in England are Grade II*.
 Grade II buildings are of special interest and account for 92% of all listed buildings.

Local Green Space:

An area of local open space which is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife. Such areas can be designated and protected through Neighbourhood or Local Plans.

Local Plan:

The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. At the present time the Local Plan consists of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, (JCS) and the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough (PBW). The JCS is sometimes called the ‘Part 1 Local Plan’ and the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough is sometimes referred to as the ‘Part 2 Local Plan’.

Localism Act 2011:

The Act which enables the Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

The main document that sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG):

Government guidance to support the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework

Nature Improvement Area (NIA):

An inter-connected network of wildlife habitats intended to re-establish thriving wildlife populations and help species respond to the challenges of climate change. The Nene Valley NIA was designated by the Government in 2012.

Neighbourhood Plan:

A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS):

The JCS is the strategic Local Plan for Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough and was adopted in 2016. It outlines a big picture which has been developed in more detail by the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough. More detailed policies applicable at a local level are included in Neighbourhood Plans. The JCS covers the period to 2031.

Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan:

The land use planning strategy for minerals and waste related development in the county.

Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough (PBW):

The PBW was adopted in 2019. It adds detail to some of the policies in the JCS and covers the period to 2031.

Policies Map:

A map which shows the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan capable of being shown on a map.

Ramsar Site:

Wetland of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and Ramsar site have identical boundaries

Rural Exception Sites:

Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Scheduled Monument:

A nationally important archaeological site or historic building, given protection against unauthorised change under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Special Protection Areas (SPA):

An area which has been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the Birds Directive. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA has been designated due to the importance of the area for over-wintering birds.

Strategic policies:

Local Plan policies that cover the 'big ideas' such as the amount of housing and employment land to be provided for.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):

A document that provides further guidance on one or more policies in the Development Plan.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

A mechanism for securing the preservation of single or groups of trees of acknowledged amenity value. A tree subject to a TPO may not normally be topped, lopped or felled without the consent of the local planning authority.

Appendix 2 Endnotes

- ⁱ Ecton Parish Council. Consultation Statement (2019) <http://www.ectonvillage.co.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>
- ⁱⁱ Borough Council of Wellingborough. Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area SPD (2015) http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200132/local_development_framework/1164/supplementary_planning_guidance-documents_and_informal_guidance
- ⁱⁱⁱ River Nene Regional Park. Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment. <http://www.rivneneregionalpark.org/>
- ^{iv} there are other buildings, structures or objects constructed before July 1948 which are ‘deemed’ to be listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of a listed building and are afforded the same protection as a listed building with its own listing entry. Curtilage listed buildings, structures and objects are not shown in Figure 4 or Figure 5.
- ^v Unless otherwise stated, percentage figures used in this section are derived from the 2011 Census (see <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>). Figures in brackets are for England as a whole and provide a comparison with data for Ecton Parish.
- ^{vi} Nomis official labour market statistics. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>
- ^{vii} North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update. (2012). <http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk/publications/strategic-housing-market-assessment-august-2012/>
- ^{viii} New Policy Institute. Market Assessment of Housing Options for Older People (2012). <https://www.npi.org.uk/publications/>
- ^{ix} Borough Council of Wellingborough. Ecton Housing Needs Survey (2017). http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200149/affordable_housing_and_development
- ^x Borough Council of Wellingborough. Housing Allocation Policy (2018). http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/a_to_z/H
- ^{xi} Borough Council of Wellingborough. Ecton Conservation Area Appraisal (2017). http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/1004/planning_policy/1170/conservation_area_appraisals
- ^{xii} Borough Council of Wellingborough. Local List of Heritage Assets Supplementary Planning Document (2013). http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200132/local_development_framework/1164/supplementary_planning_guidance-documents_and_informal_guidance
- ^{xiii} Planning Inspectorate. Report on the Examination into the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016). <http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk/publications/?q=inspectors+report>
- ^{xiv} Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council. ‘Trees and Landscape Supplementary Planning Document’ (2013). http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200132/local_development_framework/1164/supplementary_planning_guidance-documents_and_informal_guidance
- ^{xv} Borough Council of Wellingborough ‘Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for Northamptonshire’ (2015) http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200132/local_development_framework/1164/supplementary_planning_guidance-documents_and_informal_guidance
- ^{xvi} Office for low emission vehicles. Uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in the UK. (2015). <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-low-emission-vehicles>