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Report on The Giddings, Winwick and Hamerton Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036

An Examination undertaken for Huntingdonshire District Council with the support of Great and Little Gidding Parish Council on the October 2025 submission version of the Plan.

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Date of Report: 27 August 2026

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of The Giddings, Winwick and Hamerton Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) and its supporting documentation, including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- the Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Great and Little Gidding Parish Council;
- the Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – Great and Little Gidding, Hamerton and Steeple Gidding, and Winwick Neighbourhood Plan Area (map on Page 6 of the Plan);
- the Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2023 – 2036; and
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

The Gidding, Winwick and Hamerton Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036

- 1.1 The Giddings, Winwick & Hamerton Neighbourhood Plan 2023 – 2036 (the GWH Neighbourhood Plan) covers the parishes of Great and Little Gidding, Hamerton and Steeple Gidding, and Winwick. The parishes lie within Huntingdonshire District in the county of Cambridgeshire. Great and Little Gidding Parish Council has taken the lead in preparing the joint plan for the three parishes and, with the consent of the two other parishes, is authorised to act in relation to the neighbourhood area.
- 1.2 The neighbourhood area is a broadly triangular-shaped area in northwestern Cambridgeshire, on the border with Northamptonshire, generally to the north of the A14 and west of the A1(M). Within this rural area, the larger villages are Great Gidding, Winwick and Hamerton. Smaller villages are Little Gidding and Steeple Gidding. The city of Cambridge is over 25 miles away to the southeast.
- 1.3 Since designation as a neighbourhood area by Huntingdonshire District Council in March 2023, work on the Plan has progressed under the direction of a working group. In addition to input from statutory consultees, the content of the Plan has been informed by a survey of both

residents and businesses. Many of the issues raised are not land-use matters. They have led to the inclusion in the Plan of thirteen aspirations. Other planning matters are expressed in 5 key policies.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.4 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the GWH Neighbourhood Plan by Huntingdonshire District Council, with the agreement of Great and Little Gidding Parish Council.
- 1.5 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector with over forty years' experience. I have worked in both the public and the private sectors. I am an independent examiner and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.6 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.7 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ("the 1990 Act"). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under Section 38A and Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("the 2004 Act"). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land and does not go beyond the scope of what may be included in a draft plan¹;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;

¹ See Section 38B(A1) and Section 38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

- it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for “excluded development”;
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it is designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change²; and
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it takes account of any local nature recovery strategy, under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021, that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area.³
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
 - Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the 2012 Regulations”).

1.8 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

- 1.9 The “Basic Conditions” are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the neighbourhood development plan were not to be made⁴;

² This additional requirement was commenced on 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

³ See footnote above.

⁴ This Basic Condition applies from 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force Section 99 of the Levelling-up and

- be compatible with, and not breach, assimilated obligations⁵; and
- meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.10 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.⁶

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Huntingdonshire District Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 as adopted in May 2019.
- 2.2 Planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. All references in this report are to the December 2024 version of the NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including:
- the draft GWH Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036, October 2025;
 - a map which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Statement of Consultation, October 2025;
 - the Basic Conditions Statement, October 2025;
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report, January 2026, prepared by Huntingdonshire District Council;
 - GWH Local Green Spaces Evidence Report, October 2025;

Regeneration Act 2023. This replaces the former Basic Condition which required a neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

⁵ See: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which replaced the previous reference to 'EU' obligations.

⁶ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation;⁷
- the request for additional clarification sought in my letter dated 2 July 2026 and the response from Great and Little Gidding Parish Council received on 27 July 2026 and from Huntingdonshire District Council on 17 July 2026 ; and
- the responses to my letter of 2 July 2026 concerning the revisions to the legal compliance and Basic Conditions requirements from Huntingdonshire District Council and from one other party who took the opportunity to comment.⁸

Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 1 August 2026 to familiarise myself with it, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I consider hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulate the objections to the Plan and present arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The GWH Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by Great and Little Gidding Parish Council being a qualifying body for an area that was designated by Huntingdonshire District Council on 30 March 2023.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the GWH area and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

⁷ View at: <https://consult.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/kse/event/38477>

⁸ View at: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

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- 3.3 The period during which the Plan is to have effect is clarified in the main issues below.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 On behalf of the three parishes, Great and Little Gidding Parish Council applied for neighbourhood area designation in November 2022. The Great and Little Gidding, Hamerton and Steeple Gidding, and Winwick Neighbourhood Plan Area was formally approved by Huntingdonshire District Council on 30 March 2023. Since then, work on formulating the Plan has proceeded under the auspices of a neighbourhood plan working group.
- 3.5 Key events have included comprehensive residential and business surveys, community meetings in the village halls of all three parishes and the development of supporting documents such as the Local Green Spaces Report and the Contextual Analysis. In addition, informal consultation took place with Huntingdonshire District Council officers.
- 3.6 Details of persons and bodies consulted at the Regulation 14 stage (1 August 2025 to 26 September 2025) are set out in the Statement of Consultation, mainly in Section 9. Section 8 of the Statement explains how they were consulted. A summary of the main issues and concerns raised is contained in Section 10 of the Statement whilst modifications made following consultation are summarised in Section 11. There is a separate report "Summary of Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Responses" which records the representations of Anglian Water, Cambridgeshire County Council, Natural England and Historic England.
- 3.7 Consultation under Regulation 16 took place between 11 May 2026 and 23 June 2026. Some 35 discrete representations have been recorded. These are from community campaigners, public bodies and statutory consultees as well as from Cambridgeshire County Council and from Huntingdonshire District Council.
- 3.8 I have had regard to changes made to the legal compliance requirements and Basic Conditions, applying from 25 March 2026.⁹ In order to provide an opportunity for the qualifying body, local planning authority and other interested parties to comment, Huntingdonshire District Council contacted those who had made representations at the Regulation 16 stage. A two-week period was advertised by Huntingdonshire District Council on its website inviting further comments, focused only on the legislative changes. Two responses were received, including one from Huntingdonshire District Council itself. I have taken those responses into account in my assessment.
- 3.9 I am satisfied that, at both the Regulation 14 and the Regulation 16 stages, the consultation process met the legal requirements and there has

⁹ See paragraphs 1.7 – 1.9 above and the associated footnotes.

been procedural compliance. Regard has been paid to the advice on plan preparation and engagement in the PPG.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.10 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with Section 38A of the 2004 Act and does not exceed the appropriate scope of a neighbourhood plan.¹⁰

Excluded Development

- 3.11 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for “excluded development”.¹¹

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 3.12 Huntingdonshire District Council has advised that a nature recovery strategy is in place in relation to the neighbourhood area. In my assessment, none of the Plan’s policies are in direct conflict with the strategy.

Climate Change

- 3.13 Having regard to the responses received to my letter of 2 July 2026, I am satisfied that, overall, the Plan policies do not conflict with the aims of securing development which contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Human Rights

- 3.14 Great and Little Gidding Parish Council is satisfied that the Plan does not breach Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my independent assessment, I see no reason to disagree.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

Assimilated Obligations

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by Huntingdonshire District Council, which found that it was unnecessary to undertake SEA. Having read the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, I support this conclusion.
- 4.2 The GWH Neighbourhood Plan was further screened for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which also was not triggered. The site is within 15km of four Special Areas of Conservation/Special Protection

¹⁰ See Section 38B(A1) and Section 38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

¹¹ The meaning of ‘excluded development’ is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

Area/Ramsar Sites. However, there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of any of the internationally designated sites as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan either on its own or in combination with any other plans. Natural England agreed with the screening opinion (Screening Report, Appendix 1). From my independent assessment of this matter, I have no reason to disagree.

Main Issues

- 4.3 Having regard for the GWH Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses and other evidence, and the site visit, I consider that there are five main issues relating to the Basic Conditions for this examination. These concern:
- Procedural Compliance;
 - Future Development;
 - Utilities;
 - Natural Environment; and
 - Local Green Spaces.
- 4.4 Before I deal with the main issues, I have a few observations to make with regard to the representations. First, the GWH Neighbourhood Plan should be seen in the context of the wider planning system. This includes Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 as well as the NPPF and PPG. It is not necessary to repeat in the Neighbourhood Plan matters that are quite adequately dealt with elsewhere.¹² Having said that, there may be scope to give emphasis to matters particularly relevant in the context of GWH.
- 4.5 Secondly, the Neighbourhood Plan does not have to deal with each and every topic raised through the consultation. In this regard, the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and the scope of the policies is largely at the discretion of the qualifying body, albeit informed by the consultation process and the requirements set by the Basic Conditions.
- 4.6 Thirdly, my central task is to judge whether the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies the Basic Conditions. Many of the representations do not demonstrate or indicate a failure to meet those conditions or other legal requirements. Similarly, many of the suggested additions and improvements are not necessary when judged against the Basic Conditions.
- 4.7 The following section of my report sets out modifications that are necessary in order to meet the Basic Conditions. Some of the proposed modifications are factual corrections.¹³ Others are necessary in order to have closer regard to national policies and advice. In particular, plans should be succinct and contain policies that are clearly written and

¹² See NPPF Paragraph 16 f).

¹³ Modifications for the purpose of correcting errors is provided for in Paragraph 10(3)(e) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.

unambiguous.¹⁴ In addition, the policies should be supported by appropriate evidence.¹⁵

Issue 1 – Procedural Compliance

- 4.8 In terms of procedural compliance, there is a requirement for the Plan to specify the period during which it has effect.¹⁶ The front cover of the Plan shows the date “2023”. Paragraph 5.1.1 of the Plan states, “A plan period of 2036 has been chosen to match the plan period of the HDC Local Plan to 2036.” The assumed date is therefore 2023 to 2036.
- 4.9 In answer to my questions¹⁷, the Parish Council has confirmed that the Plan is indeed intended to have effect over the period 2023 to 2036. Clarity in the made version of the Plan would be ensured through proposed modification **PM1**.
- 4.10 A further requirement is to submit a map (or statement) which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development relates.¹⁸ On Page 6 of the Plan, Figure 1 arguably satisfies this requirement. However, the figure is lacking in clarity and has the appearance of an out-of-focus photograph of the designation plan, taken at an oblique angle. For clarity, a copy of the designation plan should be used in place of Figure 1 (proposed modification **PM2**).

Issue 2 – Future Development

- 4.11 Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan concerns Sensitive Future Development. The first point of the policy seeks to avoid the introduction of incongruous and/or inclusive (sic) elements into key views and vistas. In its answers to my questions¹⁹, the Parish Council confirms that the provision is intended to refer to *intrusive* elements; also, that the key views are essentially those illustrated in Figure 15, “Important views across GWH”. However, further views are outlined elsewhere.
- 4.12 I see that some 23 views are referenced in the Village Contextual Analysis. However, these are not specifically referred to in the Plan. There would not have been a realistic opportunity for all interested parties to comment on those views. In my opinion, the policy should only apply to the views shown on Figure 15, and then only in respect of views within the parish (part of the view from Hemington Lodge Road is over land outside the designated area).²⁰
- 4.13 With regard to Point 2 of the policy, there are a number of confusing references, including to the “Gidwickhams Contextual Analysis”. The

¹⁴ NPPF, Paragraphs 15 and 16 d).

¹⁵ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

¹⁶ Section 38B(1)(a) of the 2004 Act.

¹⁷ See Parish Council’s response received on 27 July 2026.

¹⁸ Regulation 15(1)(a) of the 2012 Regulations.

¹⁹ See Parish Council’s response received on 27 July 2026.

²⁰ See Section 38A(2) of the 2004 Act.

related proposed modification adds clarity to the policy and requires the provision of a link to the Analysis.

- 4.14 Point 9 of the policy seeks to apply Nationally Described Space Standards (which can only be applied in certain circumstances). However, it is clear from the Parish Council's answers to my questions²¹ that the purpose is to avoid properties out of keeping with the existing housing stock. That is a very different matter and can be covered in an appropriate amendment to the policy.
- 4.15 Proposed modification **PM3** sets out amendments to Policy 1 that will address the three matters described above.

Issue 3 – Utilities

- 4.16 In Policy 2 – Utilities, the Parish Council's answers to my questions²² confirm that a reference to Surface Water Planning Guidance has been added in the wrong place; and industry standards for open access ducting have not been referenced. Matters would be corrected under proposed modification **PM4**.

Issue 4 – Natural Environment

- 4.17 Policy 3 has the title "Promote a Biodiverse, Natural Environment". As part of this ambition, Point 1 of the policy indicates that new development should incorporate a 20% net gain in local biodiversity".
- 4.18 In regard to the percentage of biodiversity net gain, the Planning Practice Guidance states, "Plan makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development and less justified. To justify such policies they will need to be evidenced including as to local need for a higher percentage, local opportunities for a higher percentage and any impact on viability for development."²³
- 4.19 Whilst the ambitions of the Parish Councils are laudable, the evidence advised under the PPG has not been provided. As such, the reference to 20% net gain will have to be re-phrased. Proposed modification **PM5** refers.

²¹ See Parish Council's response received on 27 July 2026.

²² See Parish Council's response received on 27 July 2026.

²³ PPG Reference ID: 74-006-20240214.

Issue 5 – Local Green Space

4.20 The protection of Local Green Spaces is dealt with in Policy 5. Aside from one or two errors in the text, there are a number of matters that require modification:

- For clarity, the policy needs to state that the candidate spaces are designated through the policy.
- Reference to proposals “in the vicinity of green spaces” should be replaced by reference to the *setting* of the green spaces. This is a clearer concept that will assist in development management.
- There is confusion over the inclusion or otherwise of the churchyards referred to in Paragraph 15.10.1.
- The spaces should be mapped in the Neighbourhood Plan, not in a supporting document, so as to give clarity to the areas affected by the policy.

4.21 To meet these points, an alternative form of wording is recommended in proposed modification **PM6**.

Other Policies

4.22 There remains one policy in the Plan that has not be the subject of commentary in the above report. This is Policy 4, “Protect Heritage Assets”. To a greater or lesser extent, this topic is covered in NPPF Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

4.23 Subject to the modifications that I have recommended, I find that there has been regard for national policy and that the Basic Conditions have been met in the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Minor Amendments and Updates

4.24 Minor amendments to the text and numbering (sections, paragraphs etc) can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes or updates, in agreement between Huntingdonshire District Council and Great and Little Gidding Parish Council.²⁴

²⁴ PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The GWH Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The GWH Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 It is evident that a considerable amount of time and effort has been devoted to the development and production of this Plan and I congratulate those who have been involved. The Plan should prove to be a useful tool for future planning and change in GWH over the coming years.

Andrew S Freeman

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no	Modification
PM1	Front cover	On the front cover of the Plan change "2023" to "2023 to 2036".
PM2	Page 6	For Figure 1, substitute a copy of the plan accompanying the neighbourhood area designation approval dated 30 March 2023.
PM3	Page 24	Change the ending of Point 1 of Policy 1 so that it reads, "intrusive elements into the important views shown in Figure 15, in so far as they relate to land within the Neighbourhood Plan Area." Amend Point 2 of the policy so that it reads, "With reference to built form, scale, proportions, details and materials, new developments should reflect and respect the existing character and identity of the villages as set out in the GWH Neighbourhood Plan - Village Contextual Analysis." Provide a link to the Contextual Analysis. Substitute the following for Point 9 of the policy: "New residential units should reflect the size and nature of existing properties in the parishes which are predominantly medium to large detached houses."
PM4	Page 26	In Policy 2, substitute the following for Point 3: "As set out in Surface Water Planning Guidance, the rate of surface water discharge from any new development on previously developed land shall not exceed the existing runoff rate." Provide a link to Surface Water Planning Guidance. In Point 4, quote the document where industry standards on open access ducting can be found and add a link thereto.
PM5	Page 31	In the first point in Policy 3, replace 20% with 10%. Add, "Net gain at a level of 20% will be supported and encouraged."

PM6	Pages 41 and 42	Replace Policy 5 with the following: "1. The nine spaces identified in Paragraphs 15.10.2, 15.10.3 and 15.10.4, and mapped in the [refer to the figures identifying the spaces], are designated as Local Green Spaces. 2. Any new proposal affecting the Local Green Spaces or their setting should respect their use, scale, aspect and visual contribution to the settlement. 3. Development proposals on these sites will not be supported unless they are consistent with national policy for Green Belts." Include, in Section 15, plans from the Local Green Spaces Evidence Report, October 2025, that identify the respective spaces.
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