

Awbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan

Decision Statement: August 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Test Valley Borough Council has a statutory duty to assist communities in the preparation of neighbourhood development plans and orders and to take plans through a process of examination and referendum. The Localism Act 2011 (Part 6 chapter 3) sets out the Local Planning Authority's responsibilities under Neighbourhood Planning.

1.2 This statement confirms that the modifications proposed by the examiner's report have been accepted, the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan will be altered as a result of it; and that this plan may now proceed to referendum.

2. Background

2.1 The Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area that was designated by Test Valley Borough Council as a neighbourhood area in May 2018. This area corresponds with the Awbridge Parish Council boundary that lies within the Test Valley Borough Council Area.

2.2 Following the submission of the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan to the Borough Council, the plan was publicised and representations were invited. The publicity period ran from 10 April to 25 May 2026.

2.3 David Kaiserman was appointed by Test Valley Borough Council with the consent of Awbridge Parish Council, to undertake the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan and to prepare a report of the independent examination.

2.4 The examiner's report concludes that subject to making the modifications recommended by the examiner, the Plan meets the basic conditions set out in the legislation and should proceed to a Neighbourhood Planning referendum.

3. Decision

3.1 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 requires the local planning authority to outline what action to take in response to the recommendations of an examiner made in a report under paragraph 10 of Schedule 4A to the 1990 Act (as applied by Section 38A of the 2004 Act) in relation to a neighbourhood development plan.

3.2 Having considered each of the modifications made by the examiner's report and the reasons for them, and the modifications to reflect comments made Test Valley Borough Council in consultation with Awbridge Parish Council have decided to accept all the modifications to the draft plan. Table 1 below outlines the alterations made to the draft plan under paragraph 12(6) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (as applied by Section 38A of 2004 Act) in response to each of the Examiner's recommendations and the modifications required in response to comments made at the Regulation 16 consultation. This statement should be read alongside the Examiners report.

Table 1

Where modifications are recommended to **policies they are highlighted in bold** print. Any associated or *free-standing changes to the text of the Plan* are set out in *italic* print

Ref	Policy / Paragraph	Examiners recommendation	Proposed Modification
19	The Plan period	<i>The plan period must be stated. In the case of the ANP this is given as “to 2040”: this aligns with the end-date of an earlier draft of the new Local Plan, but not with either the adopted LP or the current draft of the updated one. I asked the Parish Council for clarification on its intentions here, and it has said that it would support modifications such that the Plan period is consistently given as 2025-2042. I recommend that this be done.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
36	Appendices / Contents page	<i>The Plan’s content page shows a total of nine appendices, some of which (such as the Local Green Space Assessment) are key to understanding certain policies. These are not included in the Plan document itself, nor do they appear as direct links from TVBC’s ANP webpage. While that page does include a link to the relevant Parish Council website, the further link there to the Plan’s appendices is somewhat buried. I recommend that the appendices to the Plan are attached to it in a much more straightforward way, and that the contents page be amended to show where they can be found.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
38	Contents page	<i>The contents page has different headings for two of these topic areas: “Built Development” and “Infrastructure”. To avoid confusion, I recommend that this anomaly should be removed. In addition, I suggest that the contents page includes the policies themselves and the pages on which they can be found: at present it only references paragraph numbers.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
42	Policy A1: Landscape character	I recommend that two changes be made to the policy, the reasons for which I think are self-explanatory. Firstly, the opening sentence should be preceded by the phrase “<u>Where relevant to its character and location</u>, development proposals should have regard...”.	Accept Examiners Modification

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		Secondly, the following should be added to the first requirement ‘...lose their individual identity, <u>as set out in Policy A6 of this Plan</u> ’.	
43	Policy A1: Landscape character	In addition, it is not clear what part iv of the policy means (“addressing the issues and solutions as identified in Appendix IV and as highlighted in the supporting text”). There is no explanation of the purpose of Appendix IV, in particular insofar as its relationship with the Design Code is concerned, and the reference to supporting text is too vague. On the face of it, there is also unnecessary overlap with other policies in both the NP and the LP. I recommend that part iv of the policy be deleted.	Accept Examiners Modification
45	Figure 13	<i>In order for Policy A2 to have more clarity, I recommend that figure 13 be replaced with a simpler map which shows more clearly the precise location of the viewpoints.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
54	Map 14	<i>Map 14 shows the location of the parcels of land to be protected. However, parts of it are difficult to read because of the positioning of the captions.</i> <i>I recommend that each site be given its own, clearer map.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
61	Policy A4.1: Biodiversity and habitats	I recommend that the Policy be replaced by the following: “In line with statutory requirements, new development will be required where appropriate to provide a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. Development proposals will be required to have regard to TVLP Policies E2 and E5. Where relevant, proposals must: i. protect, or mitigate any impact on, the Ancient Woodlands shown on figure 17; ii. protect the international and national designations (including Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest etc.) as shown in Figures 16 and 18; and iii. avoid the loss of significant trees and hedges and, where possible, improve the linkage between existing wildlife corridors, as shown on figure 19. Where the loss of a mature tree or hedgerow is unavoidable, the proposals must make provision on site for	Accept Examiners Modification

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		replacements that are of a similar type to those lost and be native species, in accordance with those listed in the Design Code. In addition, proposals must protect and, if appropriate to their scale and nature, enhance biodiversity sites of local value to the Plan area (e.g. Awbridge Hill Nature Sanctuary), as well as the non-statutory sites and the biodiversity opportunity areas shown on figure 18 and the individual types of local priority habitats shown on figure 17. Where appropriate and feasible, new development must also take the opportunity to provide bat boxes, bird boxes (including swift boxes), hedgehog houses and highways through fences”.	
62	New paragraph (6.4.6)	<i>I further recommend that the following be added to the introductory text to the policy after paragraph 6.4.5:</i> <i>“The Environment Act 2021 requires certain planning permissions to be subject to a condition requiring details of how a net gain of 10% in biodiversity can be achieved (on the site or elsewhere). More generally, when assessing planning applications which might impact on biodiversity and other natural assets, the local planning authority will have regard in particular to TVLP Policy E5, which seeks to conserve, and where possible restore and/or enhance these features, while setting out the circumstances where loss or harm to them would not be permitted.”</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
65	Paragraph 6.4.12	<i>The Mottisfont Bats Special Area of Conservation is one of only six known “maternity sites” (where female bats gather to give birth and raise their young) in the UK. The supporting material to this policy says that the rare Barbastelle bat makes use of a much wider area around the SAC “and could potentially be foraging and breeding at satellite sites in the Plan area”. Neither the policy nor the introduction to it points out that the SAC itself lies outside the Plan area, and therefore its provisions cannot apply directly to it.</i> <i>I recommend that this is made clear in paragraph 6.4.12.</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
68	Policy A4.4: New Forest Special Protection Area	TVBC asks for an addition to the second paragraph of the policy, so that it reads: “This could be in the form of a financial contribution towards an agreed package of mitigation measures within and outside the designated sites, including the provision of alternative natural green space for recreational use <u>to the standard in force at the time of</u>	Accept Examiners Modification

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		<u>the application. Such mitigation measures must be secured for the duration of the development's effects and must fully adhere to any updates to the guidance issued following the approval of this Plan</u>". I recommend that this be done.	
70	Policy A5: Dark night skies	I recommend that the last paragraph of the policy be replaced with: "Proposals for new street lighting will only be supported in principle where there is a strong case for it on highway and pedestrian safety grounds".	Accept Examiners Modification
75	Figure 22	<i>I therefore recommend that figure 22 be amended by the removal of the references to areas 1, 2 and 3</i>	Accept Examiners Modification
75	Policy A6: Setting of the dispersed settlements	I therefore recommend that Policy A6 be replaced with the following: "Development proposals will be required to safeguard the separateness and distinctive character of the different settlements within the Parish, principally Awbridge, Kent's Oak, Upper Ratley, Awbridge Hill and Stanbridge Earls. Proposals which individually or cumulatively might result in the merging of these settlements will not be supported."	Accept Examiners Modification
87	Policy A7: Housing	I recommend that Policy A7 be replaced with the following: "Proposals for an affordable housing site or community led site (with an element of affordable housing to meet local need) would be supported in principle. Schemes will be expected to have regard to the requirements of Local Plan Policy E1, which seeks high quality design in the Borough; Local Plan Policy E2, which aims to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape character of the Borough; Local Plan Policies COM 8 and COM9, which govern rural exception affordable housing and community-led schemes respectively); other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan (in particular policies A2, A3, A4.1 and A9); and the detailed considerations set out in the Parish-wide Design Code".	Accept Examiners Modification

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88	Policy A8: Non-designated heritage assets	I recommend a minor addition to the Policy such that it read: “Development proposals should demonstrate how they will preserve and, <u>where appropriate and practicable</u>, enhance non-designated heritage assets...”.	Accept Examiners Modification
90	Policy A9: Design	As it stands, the opening paragraph of the policy is unclear in its wording. I recommend that it be replaced with the following: “New development will be expected to demonstrate how consideration has been given both to the Character Appraisal of the Plan area (as highlighted in figure 30) and relevant parts of the Parish-wide Design Code. Elements which are likely to be of particular importance include:...”.	Accept Examiners Modification
95	Policy A11: Accessibility, public rights of way and highway safety	I recommend that Policy A11 be replaced with the following: “Support in principle will be given to development proposals which include measures for improving the safety and convenience of local walking and cycling routes between the settlements and to community facilities and the wider area, a priority being the potential route shown on figure 35. All proposals should have regard to Local Plan Policies T1 (managing development) and T2 (parking standards). Particular attention will be given to addressing parking problems in the vicinity of the primary school.”	Accept Examiners Modification
100	Policy A12: Community facilities	I recommend that Policy A12 be replaced with the following: “Development that would enhance the range of local retail services, recreation and other social amenities will be supported in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant development plan policies”.	Accept Examiners Modification
102	Policy A13: Small-scale employment uses	The second part of the policy encourages “new and improved utility infrastructure ... to meet the identified needs of the community...”. It is not clear what this refers to, and because it is too vague a statement to be of practical value I recommend that it be deleted.	Accept Examiners Modification

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39	General	<i>The statutory consultees who responded were Southern Water, Natural England, Historic England, National Highways, the Environment Agency, The Coal Authority and Hampshire County Council. None had any adverse observations about the Plan, although some had suggestions for changes to the wording of policies (where I make no observations in response to these, I am content for the Parish Council to decide for themselves whether to incorporate them).</i>	Accept Examiners Modification to modify text where deemed appropriate in response to comments made by statutory consultees