

The Daws Hill Neighbourhood Plan

September 2019



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1. The Neighbourhood Plan - September 2019

1.1 Welcome to the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Forum ('DHNF') and our Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan').

1.2 The DHNF represents the residents in the designated Neighbourhood Area (NA) (see *Figure 1*). The DHNF includes Daws Hill and Abbey Park Residents' Association (DHRA), School Close Road Association Limited (SCRAL), and Fair Ridge, The Spinney and Foxleigh Residents' Association (FSFRA).

1.3 The Localism Act, 2011, encouraged Neighbourhood Planning. Local communities are now able to produce Neighbourhood Plans for their neighbourhood, putting in place a vision and policies for any future development of their Neighbourhood Area.

1.4 Our designated Neighbourhood Area (NA) (see *Figure 1*) is bounded by the M40 from Daws Hill Lane/Heath End Road bridge over the M40 to Junction 4 (Handy Cross) on the M40 but omitting the Handy Cross Hub, the A404 Marlow Hill Road from north of Handy Cross to the Marlow Hill/Daws Hill Lane junction, along the boundary of Wycombe Abbey School, and incorporating the existing houses on Knights Templar Way and adjoining roads. The designated NA is somewhat smaller than that which we applied for.

1.5 The Plan has been prepared by DHNF in consultation with the residents of the Daws Hill NA, together with the input from the people and organisations set out in the Consultation Statement, which forms an integral part of the Plan.

1.6 The vision of this Plan is:

- ***To preserve and enhance the character of the Daws Hill area of High Wycombe for the benefit of present and future residents and visitors.***

1.7 We commend this plan to our members and to Wycombe District Council as an objective, valid plan for sustainable development with strong support from Flackwell Heath Residents Association, Warren Wood Residents Association and East of Amersham Hill Residents Association.

Signed:

Secretary, Daws Hill Neighbourhood Forum

2. Background and Formulation of Strategic Objectives

2.1 Creation of the Neighbourhood Forum

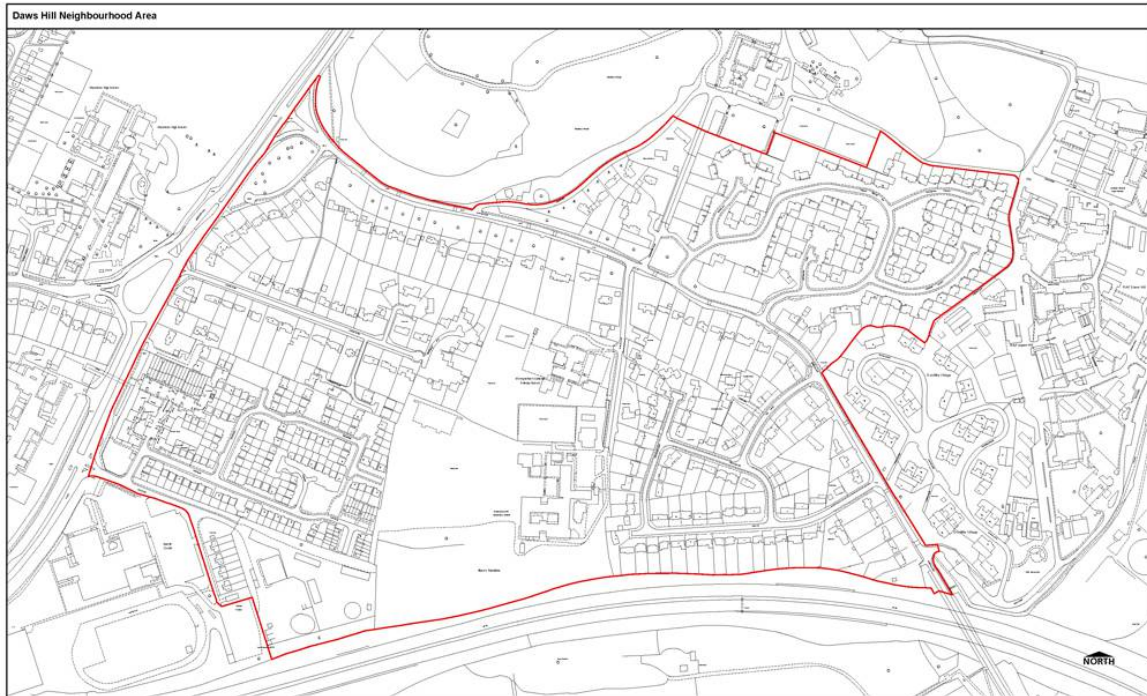


Figure 1: The Designated Neighbourhood Area

2.1.1 The Daws Hill Residents' Association (DHRA) published its position statements in 2011, listed as Appendix B4 in the documents referred to in this Plan. From those position statements, our guiding principles are that any new development should:

- *Respect and enhance the character of the locality;*
- *Respect and reflect the heritage of High Wycombe;*
- *Respect the integrity of existing developments and the quality of life not only of existing but also of future residents;*
- *Not exacerbate existing problems of traffic flow, traffic volume and pedestrian safety;*
- *Contribute to alleviating problems through sustainable development, not transfer them to other localities.*

2.1.2 In May 2012, under the new Government Localism Act, Daws Hill Residents' Association (DHRA) applied to Wycombe District Council (WDC) to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum (NF). Subsequently DHRA applied for the designation of the associated NA as shown in the red outline in *Figure 2* together with the then RAF Daws Hill site and the Handy Cross Sports Centre site. The DHNF and an associated NA (as per *Figure 1*) were designated by WDC on 25th September 2012. Subsequently, in September 2017 DHNF was required to apply for re-designation, and this was granted by WDC on 12 February 2018.

2.2 Why we need a Plan

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2.2.1 In Locality's *Guiding principles on Neighbourhood Planning*, there is emphasis on the inclusion of all types of 'uses'—residential, commercial and industrial, and recreation/leisure—in all areas as part of the Government's desire and push for economic growth. DHNF was established to promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood for people living or working in the neighbourhood. Our neighbourhood area's historical primary uses are *residential, educational and leisure*, all key facilities in supporting any society. Our members have questioned the appropriateness of inclusion of 'all uses' mentioned above in our area mainly because of the historical character of the area, and because of a perceived lack of demand at present for commercial and industrial spaces.

2.2.2 The proposed developments within DHNA should be focused on meeting the needs of the people who presently live in the area, on meeting the needs of those who will come to live in the area post-development, on considering the needs of those living and working in High Wycombe, and on ensuring care for the environment.

2.3 Vision Statement

2.3.1 In drawing up the Plan it is necessary to have a vision of what the Plan is trying to achieve. This is summed up in the following vision statement:

To preserve and enhance the character of the Daws Hill area of High Wycombe for the benefit of present and future residents and visitors.

2.4 Sustainable Development

2.4.1 Sustainable development—the driving force behind The Plan—will lead to a better quality of life for the neighbourhood residents as well as the wider community of High Wycombe and, in so doing, help meet the environmental challenges of the future. To this end, this Plan supports developments that:

- minimise the use of fuel and water,
- provide sufficient off-road parking spaces for vehicles, together with provisions for sustainable transport (e.g. cycle racks and EV charging points).
- provide access to high-speed broadband,
- minimise surface water run-off,
- provide employment opportunities that do not impinge on the enjoyment by neighbours of their property,
- protect the natural environment and provide suitable habitat for wildlife,
- provide additional recreational facilities for residents and visitors.

2.5 Where we are Situated

2.5.1 The Daws Hill NA is situated towards the south east of High Wycombe, itself in the Chiltern Hills, within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is bounded by green belt land of open fields and woodland. It is a semi-rural suburban area much of which is characterised by substantial tree coverage and low housing densities. The Chiltern Hills are nationally protected as some of the finest countryside in the UK, and are characterised by chalk streams, woodlands, red kites, farming, and an historic environment: they are home to many past and present famous people in British history—artists, world-renowned authors, eminent

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politicians and past kings and queens.

- 2.5.2 There are four large schools either in or adjacent to our NA: *St Michael's Catholic School* (within the NA) (light blue star in *Figure 2*), and *John Hampden Grammar School* (yellow star in *Figure 2*), *Wycombe High School for Girls* (purple star in *Figure 2*) on Marlow Hill and *Wycombe Abbey School for Girls* (mauve star in *Figure 2*) bordering the NA.

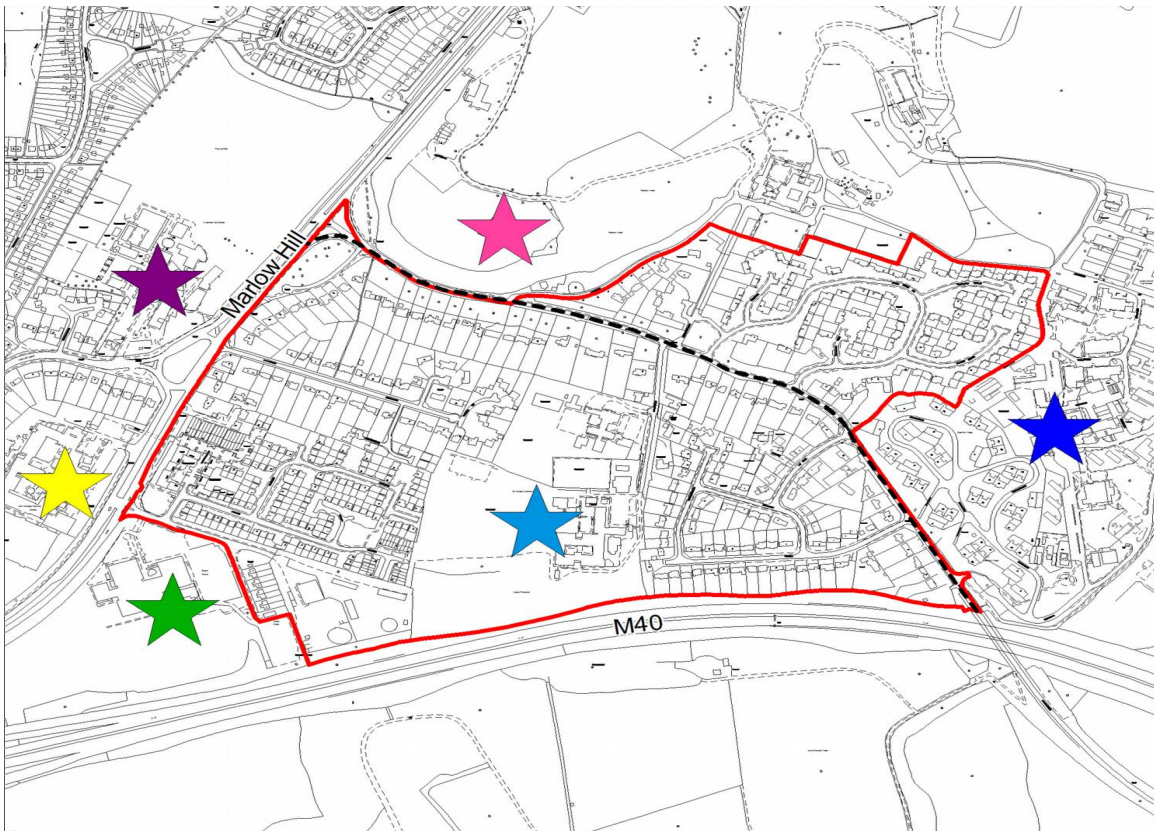


Figure 2: Daws Hill Neighbourhood Area and adjacent sites

2.6 Details of the Neighbourhood Area

- 2.6.1 The Neighbourhood Area (see *Figure 1*) is adjacent to the M40, with two major arterial highways—Daws Hill Lane and Marlow Hill—running through/alongside it. The core of the area is Daws Hill Lane, Abbey Park and Daws Lea estates, School Close and the Fair Ridge/The Spinney/Foxleigh estate.
- 2.6.2 Daws Hill Lane is a semi-rural country road-turned major traffic cut-through, and Marlow Hill is the access route for motorists in the greater Wycombe area to get to the M40/A404 and beyond. Daws Hill Lane is the only major east-west route through the NA. The A404 Marlow Hill Road is the only major north-south route, and is the western boundary of the NA. Daws Hill Lane crosses the motorway at the eastern extremity of the NA, and becomes Heath End Road leading eastwards to open countryside and on to Flackwell Heath some 3 miles away, and westwards to the A404 Marlow Hill junction.
- 2.6.3 The former RAF Daws Hill site, now called the Pinetrees Development which is

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under construction, is situated on the eastern edge of our NA (dark blue star in *Figure 2*). This development is bounded to the north west by the grounds of Wycombe Abbey School; to the north by Warren Wood and Deangarden Wood; to the east by Abbey Barn South; to the west by the Abbey Park estate—developed sympathetically in the 1970s on the site of the lacrosse pitches of Wycombe Abbey School—and to the south by the M40. The site prior to development retained numerous mature trees including Scottish pines and a wonderful clump of copper beech. The Daws Hill Residents Association (DHRA) prepared a Position Statement on the Pinetrees development, and for completeness this is included as a document in Appendix B4 of the documents referred to in this Plan. During the development of the site by Taylor Wimpey several hundred of these trees have been removed despite the elevated position of the site, making management and preservation of the remaining trees in the NA a key priority.

- 2.6.4 The Abbey Barn North and Abbey Barn South sites that are adjacent and to the East of the Pinetrees development, were released from the reserved planning sites in 2014 to fulfil the present housing shortage. DHNF participated in the development workshops in relation to these sites to endeavour to mitigate the impact on the NA and its residents. DHNF also participated in the Wycombe-wide infrastructure workshops.
- 2.6.5 The Handy Cross Sports Centre site (now the Handy Cross Hub), which has planning permission and is partly built, is situated adjacent to the south west of our NA (green star in *Figure 2*), bounded by the M40 motorway, the Handy Cross gyratory (junction 4 on the M40), the A404 Marlow Hill Road, and the Fair Ridge/The Spinney/Foxleigh residential development. DHNF responded to WDC PS10 and Development Brief for Handy Cross Sports Centre site, and for completeness this is included as a document in Appendix B4 of the documents referred to in this Plan.
- 2.6.6 The NA of crescents, closes and cul-de-sacs are existing residential developments of mainly detached houses or bungalows of traditional design with front and rear gardens and driveways/hard-standing for parking. Many trees were retained from the Daws Hill House grounds that were developed in the late 1960s and 70s. There are no commercial, industrial buildings or retail facilities within the NA.
- 2.6.7 Daws Hill Lane is fundamental to the semi-rural character of the area, lined with mature hardwood trees on both sides, many with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's); trees on the south side are in the front gardens of individually designed pre-war houses mostly set back from the Lane in their own large plots; trees on the north side mostly within the perimeters of the developments.
- 2.6.8 On the opposite side of Daws Hill Lane from the Pinetrees development is The Daws Lea Estate, developed in the late 1960s. Here, sympathetic development preserved much of the arboreal heritage from the gardens of the Daws Hill House. The Ride on the eastern side of the Pinetrees development is the remains of the impressive avenue of trees that led up to Daws Hill House.
- 2.6.9 Austenwood Close and Crispin Way adjoin the Abbey Park Estate, a hundred yards or so distant from the Pinetrees development. A short cul-de-sac (also called Daws Hill Lane) leads to St Michaels' Catholic School. The NA extends south to the M40 motorway and encompasses the estates of School Close and of Fair Ridge, The Spinney and Foxleigh, which is adjacent to the Handy Cross Sports Centre.
- 2.6.10 The general character of these developments is that of a garden suburb and is

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described in detail in the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Area Character Assessment Report, listed as Appendix A1 of the documents referred to in this Plan.

2.7 Requirements of the Community for Sustainable Development

- 2.7.1 The requirements of the community set out in this plan are based on residents' views obtained through discussions at public meetings, surveys, consultation to proposals put forward by WDC through exhibitions and leaflets, workshops held by WDC and through the Neighbourhood Forum Committee's consultation and feedback from members and residents. Additionally, requirements identified via the Regulation 14 Consultation with statutory bodies have been included. Further details are available in the Consultation Statement listed as Appendix B1 of the documents referred to in this Plan.
- 2.7.2 Insofar as the requirements go for a community like ours, the NA residents are within easy reach of a number of industrial/commercial parks (Cressex Industrial Estate, Globe Park, Knaves Beech Industrial Estate), of significant retail facilities (for example Eden Centre and Wycombe town centre, Wycombe Marsh retail park, John Lewis, Waitrose, Asda, Next, Tesco Loudwater, and with the nearby Sainsbury's Local at Flackwell Heath and Tesco Metro on Marlow Road selling food and essential non-food items), and of major transport links (A40, M40, A404/M4, M25, Heathrow, Chiltern Railways).
- 2.7.3 Public transport serving the NA is the No. 36 bus route. This is the only public transport service in the NA, and operates from the bus station at the Eden Shopping Centre via Marlow Hill, Daws Hill Lane and Flackwell Heath to Bourne End, once every 30 minutes (60 minutes outside College term time), from 6.30 am to 9.30 pm. There is a good train service operated by Chiltern Railways in to and out of High Wycombe. Other longer-distance coach services are provided from the bus station adjacent to Eden Shopping Centre and the Handy Cross Hub. The National express coach services now run from the Handy Cross Hub to London and to Stansted, Luton and Gatwick airports.
- 2.7.4 Education in the local and wider area is excellent—although we have established that many of the schools are currently at or near capacity. With regard to medical facilities, there are no GP/dental practices in the NA, and the main Accident and Emergency service has been moved to Stoke Mandeville hospital from the Wycombe General Hospital. A minor injuries unit remains at the Wycombe General hospital.
- 2.7.5 Leisure and fitness requirements are currently provided at Handy Cross Sports Centre—a district-wide facility currently being redeveloped—the Rye, and by other local clubs and smaller facilities. There are footpaths and walks in the surrounding AONB within a few minutes of the NA.
- 2.7.6 Developments in the NA may pose a real challenge to local GP practices in terms of infrastructure:
- Accessing the clinical team based on capacity versus demand for appointments
 - Car parking
 - The need for more consulting space and larger/additional waiting areas.

2.8 Issues Facing the Area

- 2.8.1 *Roads:* As a consequence of the local topography of the Chiltern Hills AONB, of the NA being bounded by the M40 and Marlow Hill, and of a limited public bus service, the major arterial roads are congested, often far beyond the rush-hour. Any incidents on the M40 and A40 can bring traffic in the NA to a standstill. The

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development of Pinetrees and adjacent sites, and the Handy Cross Hub, will add to the problem unless credible mitigation measures are put in place.

- 2.8.2 *Traffic Planning:* While the powers of a Neighbourhood Forum are limited in respect of transport planning, such is the gravity of this matter that the Daws Hill Residents Association prepared a Position Statement on this matter, included for completeness as a document in Appendix B4 of the documents referred to in this Plan. Additionally, DHNF commissioned a report from a traffic-planning expert, Alan Lewis of WSP Group. His report and conclusions are listed as Appendix B5 of the documents referred to in this Plan. It is understood that the Southern Quadrant Transport Strategy (SQTS) commissioned and adopted by Buckinghamshire County Council in 2013 will likely be superseded by the output of the 2015 Wycombe-wide infrastructure workshops held by WDC, in which we have participated.
- 2.8.3 *Public Transport:* The NA is already poorly served by public transport (only the No.36 bus as described in para 1.22). SQTS outlined the need for a public transport, walking and cycling link from Daws Hill Lane to the committed Handy Cross Hub. The original preferred option was for a route via Daws Lea (a residential road) and would involve the demolition of a residential property at the end of Daws Lea to connect the link to Handy Cross. This link effectively removes the only existing No. 36 bus service from the length of Daws Hill Lane. As part of the planning permission for the ex-RAF Daws Hill site (now called 'Pinetrees') the developer is to fund this link proposal. The Bucks CC decision of routing the bus link down Daws Lea (a residential road) was called in by the Bucks CC Scrutiny Committee in 2013, and the Cabinet Member for transport agreed that the alternative route (which DHNF had earlier proposed) between the houses on the southern side of Daws Lea and the M40 motorway should be taken forward as the preferred option.
- 2.8.4 *Access/egress from development sites:* given the already heavily congested access/egress points to/from Pinetrees and the Handy Cross Hub, the greatly increased number of vehicle movements associated with these developments is bound to detrimentally impact on the residents of the NA unless credible mitigation measures are put in place. Reference should be made to the BCC Highways Development Management Guidance;
- 2.8.5 *(Un)Controlled parking:* inconsiderate and dangerous parking by persons collecting children from St Michael's School must be addressed in the interests of safety and well-being of existing residents in the NA. The introduction of parking control in the NA was agreed as part of the planning approval for the RAF Daws Hill development site where a school drop-off point is to be located. This school drop off point would stop the dangerous use of residential roads by double-decker buses and coaches for parking and turning round. The enforcement of parking controls and the official drop off point will be key to the success in reducing this risk;
- 2.8.6 *Utilities:* Sewage tankers have been used to prevent local sewerage flooding in areas of High Wycombe, but not in the Daws Hill area. A further concern is the release of untreated raw sewage from Little Marlow Sewage treatment Works into the River Thames, for which Thames Water was fined in 2017. The impact of the total demand on utilities—e.g. waste-water treatment, water supply and water mains pressure, gas and electricity supply, telephone—required by the new developments adjacent to the NA needs to be accommodated so that there is no detriment to existing NA residents. For water supply, Thames Water has to supply the minimum Statutory water pressure of 1 bar at the outside stop valve;

- 2.8.7 *Other Key Facilities:* Local school places, medical and dental facilities are already fully- or over-subscribed;
- 2.8.8 *Environment:* Many of the trees in the NA are mature, and the number of trees in the area has steadily fallen. A management plan is required if the existing sylvan nature of much of the area is to be maintained.
- 2.8.9 *Noise:* The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides some general guidance on taking noise in to account in planning policies and decisions. The key impact from noise for the Daws Hill NA is the M40 motorway on the Southern boundary of the NA. This has been recognised by Highways England and work is commencing in Summer, 2017 to construct noise barriers along the stretch of the M40 alongside the NA which will reduce the noise pollution. However, monitoring of the traffic noise levels will need to continue subsequent to the erection of the noise barriers to ensure the noise reduction achieves the appropriate levels.
- 2.8.10 *Air Pollution:* The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Defra, 2007) sets out a framework for air quality management, which includes a number of air quality objectives. National and international measures are expected to achieve these objectives in most locations, but where areas of poor air quality remain, air quality management at a local scale has a particularly important role to play. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to periodically review and assess air quality in their areas. The role of this process is to identify areas where it is unlikely that the air quality objectives will be achieved. It is important that Wycombe District Council continues to monitor both noise and nitrogen dioxide levels the full length of the M40 motorway boundary with our Neighbourhood Area so that appropriate measures can be put in place and be seen to be working. This would ensure that all residents could see that noise and air-quality levels are within legal limits. The NA is located between the Marlow Hill road and the M40, both of which are understood to have air quality issues and are designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). Results are awaited from air quality assessments taken by Wycombe District Council. The written reports are important as these may well have a major impact on planning consultations in the area.
- 2.8.11 *Employment:* The current composition of the NA obviates against the inclusion of even small industrial, commercial or retail units. There are a number of businesses run within the existing properties, including a care home, a dance school and businesses from home. The availability of high-speed broadband and the large size of some of the existing properties provide opportunities for businesses such as these to increase and prosper.
- 2.8.12 *Overdevelopment:* There is pressure within the NA to pull down and redevelop some of the larger properties. This can be permitted only where the character of the area is preserved, including retention/replacement wherever possible of existing trees and environmental corridors, and provision of sufficient off-street parking facilities. Increasing the number of vehicles per property would also exacerbate an already dire traffic problem along Daws Hill Lane and Marlow Hill.

2.9 Strategic Objectives

- 2.9.1 The above issues lead to the specifying of strategic objectives to tackle them.
- 2.9.2 During consultations with residents over the neighbouring developments at Pinetrees and the Handy Cross Hub it was manifestly clear that they desired the existing wooded nature of the Plan area to be preserved. The first strategic objective, therefore, is:

(1) wherever possible, to maintain and enhance the existing mature trees, hedgerows and green spaces within the Plan area.

2.9.3 A further major concern was the problem of traffic, and its associated congestion, parking, noise and pollution. Daws Hill Lane is a major east-west route south of High Wycombe Town Centre and will be expected to carry a heavy volume of traffic for the foreseeable future, particularly at peak times. The Plan seeks to contribute to containing this problem, recognising residents' and visitors' need to have personal transport, and at the same time encourage economic development in the Plan area. This is most likely to arise from home-working made possible by the availability of high-speed broadband. The second strategic objective, therefore, is:

(2) to ensure that proposed development incorporates measures to promote sustainable travel, provide adequate parking space and provision of up-to-date electronic communications to facilitate home-working.

2.9.4 Land for new development within the Plan area is very limited, and pressure is already being exerted to replace larger properties with several smaller properties. Residents again are concerned by this because of the generation of further traffic problems, the impact on wildlife prevalent in the Plan area, and the increased run-off of surface water caused by reducing the area of soil currently helping to absorb it. The same concerns apply to non-residential developments in the Plan area. The third strategic objective, therefore, is:

(3) to control, through quality design, residential and non-residential development to minimise its impact on traffic generation, on surface-water flooding, and on wildlife and the natural environment, at the same time ensuring its compatibility with the existing built environment.

2.9.5 Residents also point to the limited leisure and sporting facilities in the Plan area, and the need to preserve and even enhance those that currently exist. These consist mainly of small plots of open land used for recreational facilities, such as dog-walking. There are also two larger pieces of land in the Plan area, namely St. Michael's School playing fields, used by residents' children while at the school, and Myee's Plantation. The fourth strategic objective, therefore, is:

(4) to prevent wherever possible the loss, without alternative provision, of existing open spaces and local green spaces (as defined in planning law).

3. Compliance with National, Local and EU Planning Obligations

3.1 Compliance with National Planning Obligations

3.1.1 Planning decisions are guided by policies referred to when planning applications are made. In developing a Neighbourhood Plan, the Localism Act provides that a Neighbourhood Forum is able to set out policies for the NA in question, provided these policies are based on sound evidence, on input from the residents and businesses within the NA, and on proper principles of planning.

3.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifies the need for Sustainable Development. There are three aspects of this:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and

innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

3.1.3 Key requirements at National level are set out in the NPPF. The Plan has been checked for compliance with the NPPF (see the Basic Conditions Statement listed as Appendix B2 in the documents referred to in this Plan); where appropriate, reference is made to the NPPF in the Plan's Policy Statements.

3.2 Compliance with Local Planning Obligations

3.2.1 WDC is in the process of updating its Local Plan, but our NA is largely developed and is unlikely to be significantly affected by this updating. The Plan is required to comply with existing WDC planning policies, and this has also been checked (see the Basic Conditions Statement listed as Appendix B2 in the documents referred to in this Plan).

3.2.2 Key WDC policies that have been taken into account in the preparation of the Plan include:

- Adopted Core Strategy 2008 (CS1 – CS21)
- Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013 (DM1 – DM19)
- Adopted Wycombe District Local Plan (2004)

3.3 Compliance with EU Obligations

3.3.1 The only EU Directive that impacts on this Neighbourhood Plan is Directive 2001/42/EC. This concerns the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive).

3.3.2 This seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes. It may be of relevance to neighbourhood plans.

3.3.3 The consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal screening report was undertaken by Wycombe District Council between 10 October and 31 October 2016. The screening report, listed as Appendix B3 in the documents referred to in this Plan, concludes that there is no potential for significant environmental effects to arise and that therefore there is no legal requirement for an SEA.

4. Policy Context

- 4.1 Our policies have been formulated from the input and output from the Daws Hill Reference Group Workshops held in 2012, our Daws Hill RA and DHNF Committee meetings and Neighbourhood Plans from other areas, and have been evaluated and prioritised by the NA residents in meetings and through an on-line survey.
- 4.2 As policies, they do not deal with how that policy is carried out. Implementation and enforcement is not for us to determine, but it is for the Local Authorities to determine. However, we would expect to work with them to determine the 'how' at a later date.

5. Policies

5.1 Policy Relating to the Natural Environment

- 5.1.1 Protection and improvement of the natural environment is a prime consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan, and is recognised in the NPPF paragraph 109. Off-site mitigation should be considered as a last resort under the Mitigation Hierarchy (NPPF paragraph 118).

5.1.2 Policy 1: Protection and Improvement of the Natural Environment

5.1.2.1 Applicants for development which are identified as having the potential to impact on the biodiversity or habitat interests of a site, must demonstrate the specific measures which will be taken to avoid, minimise, mitigate or compensate for any significant harm arising from the development. Impacts that cannot be avoided should be mitigated for on-site through habitat preservation and enhancement, or creation within the green infrastructure of the site. Where this cannot be fully achieved on-site, compensation for the loss of biodiversity or habitat may be compensated for off-site through contributions to improving biodiversity in local green spaces. A biodiversity net gain for the NA will be expected whenever possible.

5.2 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

- 5.2.1 The sylvan and arcadian (dwellings set in an informal wooded landscape) nature of the NA needs to be protected and enhanced. There are many mature trees in the area, and consideration must be given to woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and woodland and wooded areas that provide screening on the 'long views' onto Daws Hill from the Amersham Hill (north) side of High Wycombe, from Marlow, from Flackwell Heath and from the AONB south of the M40. These are valuable assets to the NA. Trees and hedgerows perform a number of important roles in supporting biodiversity, providing attractive shade/shelter for wildlife and generally improving health and amenity of the NA.
- 5.2.2 During the consultations about the development of Pinetrees and the Handy Cross Hub this subject, together with traffic congestion, were the most frequently raised concerns by the residents.

5.2.3 Policy 2: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

5.2.3.1 Development proposals in the Plan area will be expected to retain existing trees and hedgerows and not to put at risk their future retention. Where this does not prove to be possible, development proposals will be permitted if it can be demonstrated through provision of a landscape scheme and management plan that the application site will gain an equivalent or greater benefit from the provision of alternate and suitable indigenous replacement trees, planted in proportions and locations that maintain the character of the area.

5.2.3.2. Development proposals in the Plan area will be required to retain existing woodland and not to put at risk its future retention. Where this does not prove to be possible, removal or fragmentation of non-ancient woodland would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

5.3 Local Green Spaces

- 5.3.1 Green spaces, including parks, common areas, front gardens and private and publicly accessible spaces contribute towards the character of the area providing resources for nature, recreation and community value. Residents appreciate these spaces and want to ensure that they are protected and enhanced. All but one of the Local Green Spaces (designated LGS 5 below) identified in this Plan are also similarly identified in the existing Local Plan currently being updated.
- 5.3.2 The loss of green spaces by the neighbouring developments currently in construction at Pinetrees and the Handy Cross Hub and the potential future loss by the planned developments at Abbey Barn North and South means that it is critical that the green spaces within the NA are retained, protected and where possible enhanced. Attention must also be paid wherever possible to the improvement of connectivity between local green spaces by suitable planting of trees and shrubs.
- 5.3.3 A Local Green Spaces Assessment has been carried out (Appendix A2) for all possible Local Green Spaces within the Neighbourhood Area. This has identified 5 Local Green Spaces for inclusion in this Plan, and these are shown in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. Map showing the 5 Local Green Spaces

5.3.4 The strip of land between the green-shaded area of Myee's Plantation and the M40 Motorway along the southern boundary of the NA has been excluded from the designation to permit the possible formation of a bridleway or bus/coach-only route alongside the motorway; this will act as a link between Pinetrees and the Handy Cross Hub. The width of this strip must be sufficient for the formation of the larger of these two options.

5.3.5 Policy 3: Local Green Spaces

5.3.5.1 The following Local Green Spaces are designated and shown on Fig (3)

- (1) the area of woodland, Myees Plantation, adjoining the M40 motorway (LGS 1)**
- (2) the area of grassland on the south side of the junction of Marlow Hill and Daws Hill Lane (LGS 2)**
- (3) the area of land off The Spinney (LGS 3)**
- (4) the area of land on Fair Ridge adjacent to Foxleigh (LGS 4)**
- (5) the area of land bordered by Fair Ridge, Marlow Hill and Fair Ridge access road (LGS 6)**

5.3.5.2 Development will not be permitted in the areas designated unless it can be shown that very special circumstances exist.

5.4 Backland Development

- 5.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (para 53) supports the progression of policies to resist inappropriate development within residential gardens where such development would cause harm to the local area.
- 5.4.2 The Daws Hill Neighbourhood Area Character Assessment 2016 (Appendix A1) recognises the largely uniform and consistent manner in which dwellings are arranged throughout Daws Hill, stating that *'properties typically adhere to consistent plot sizes, regular spacing, and buildings are of similar sizes and massing, which helps create a coherent and unified piece of townscape'*. The same document also highlights the prevalence of *'sizeable gardens to the fronts and backs of properties'*, as well as the generally *'leafy and green character'* of the road network. Combined, this regular spacing of properties and consistent plot sizes, the generally large front and back gardens, and green and soft appearance of roadsides form some of the Neighbourhood Area's most defining characteristics and are intrinsic to the quality and character of the local area.
- 5.4.3 Backland development typically results in high density arrangements, with irregular and sometimes awkward plot sizes and shapes, small gardens and minimal spacing between buildings. In most cases backland development will also entail in the loss of domestic garden land, and require a new, dedicated access from the main road, resulting in the removal of roadside grass verges, hedgerows and trees. Such development therefore poses a direct threat to the aforementioned defining local characteristics of Daws Hill, and is a form of development that will generally not be compatible with the character of the Neighbourhood Area.
- 5.4.4 Furthermore, as well as being fundamental to local character, the Neighbourhood Plan recognises the following additional benefits provided by domestic gardens, which further justify their retention and protection from inappropriate backland development:
- (1) they provide safe and secure amenity and play space, which is particularly important for those likely to spend a large part of their day in their home environment, such as those with young families, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities;
 - (2) they support biodiversity and can act as wildlife corridors;
 - (3) they reduce flood risk;
 - (4) they mitigate against the effects of climate change, including the 'heat island' effect, whereby urban areas become warmer than their rural surrounding due to the loss of soft, moist, permeable surfaces, and the creation of more hard, dry, impermeable surfaces.

5.4.5 Policy 4: Backland Development

- 5.4.5.1** New residential development which result in uncharacteristic plot sizes and shapes, irregular spacing between buildings, or erodes the character of the immediate locality will be resisted.
- 5.4.5.2** There will be a presumption against new houses which are proposed to be within rear domestic gardens to respect and maintain the existing local character of Daws Hill and to protect the biodiversity, amenity, and flood and climate change mitigation value of these private green spaces. Backland development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impact upon the following:
- 5.4.5.3** *Local character* – Building plots should be of similar size and shape to existing plots in the immediate locality, and buildings should be spaced and arranged in a manner which is consistent with that of the Character Zone within which they are located (as detailed within the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Area Character Assessment, 2016). Development should not result in the loss of roadside green features such as grass verges, hedgerows or trees.
- 5.4.5.4** *Biodiversity and amenity value* – Rear garden land which contributes either individually or as part of a larger stretch of green infrastructure to the amenity of residents or provides wildlife habitats should be retained.

5.5 Flooding and Drainage

- 5.5.1** The NA is in an elevated position relative to the town of High Wycombe. Its heavily-wooded nature and location on chalk provides much-needed rainwater absorption at a time when rainfall is tending to become more intense. The Institution of Civil Engineers has expressed its concern that current requirements for rainwater management underestimate the severity of the situation. We are conscious of our responsibilities to avoid, wherever possible, worsening this problem.
- 5.5.2** Buckinghamshire County Council's Surface Water Management Plan focuses on the cumulative benefit of relatively small amounts of attenuation in developments (sustainable urban drainage systems), rather than large stand-alone engineered options. While this approach is sound, and a practical way to reduce the risk of surface water flooding, it means that careful consideration will need to be given to ensure enough flooding capacity is provided overall.
- 5.5.3** Natural England's advice (www.naturalengland.org.uk) that schemes and features which retain and gradually release flood waters—such as sustainable urban management systems, green roofs and pervious pavements, and maintenance of existing infrastructure—are preferable to resistance and resilience measures to reduce the risk of flooding. These preferred measures can also have benefits for biodiversity.

- 5.5.4 Attention must be paid to all existing guidance documents such as Buckinghamshire County Council's Surface Water Management Plan, the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and DEFRA's Technical Advice on Surface Water Flooding and Sustainable Urban drainage Systems,
- 5.5.5 There is also a need to prevent sewer flooding. Thames Water encourages developers to use its free pre-planning service (thameswater.co.uk/preplanning) to identify whether there is sufficient capacity and what can be done if there is not.
- 5.5.6 Developers need to consider the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve their developments and also any impact the development may have off-site further down the network if no/low water pressure and internal/external sewage flooding of property is to be avoided.

5.5.7 Policy 5: Flooding and Drainage

5.5.7.1 All developments will be expected to avoid increasing surface water run-off from the periphery of the site, or to avoid increasing surface water entering existing sewers.

5.6 Quality Design

- 5.6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (para 57 and 58) recognises the importance of planning positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, and encourages the development of robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected within an area. It also acknowledges the importance of ensuring that such policies are based on an understanding and evaluation of an area's defining characteristics.
- 5.6.2 The *Daws Hill Neighbourhood Area Character Assessment, 2016* (listed as Appendix A1 in the documents referred to in this Plan) details the distinct and defining characteristics which contribute to the unique character of Daws Hill. It recognises that as a whole, the Neighbourhood Area displays a strong, overarching character, which stems from the largely regular and spacious layout and arrangement of individual properties, the large gardens within which they sit, and the consistent wooded and green appearance of the locality and wider surroundings. The protection and enhancement of this spacious, wooded and green character has been identified through community consultation as of high priority to local residents.
- 5.6.3 The *Character Assessment* also recognises that within this overarching green and spacious character, there are a number of specific areas that display a collection of common features and characteristics. It identifies 7 of these 'Character Zones' within Daws Hill. It is essential that future development contributes to the enhancement of this wider semi-rural, wooded, green character, but also respects and responds positively to the more distinct characteristics of the Character Zones within which they are located or adjoin.
- 5.6.4 While most of the NA is developed, any new development should be to the higher standards now expected. Particular attention will be expected to be paid to minimising energy and water consumption, minimising surface water run-off, and

providing connection to high-speed broadband. Any development not paying attention to these matters will be opposed.

- 5.6.5 Sufficient external amenity space must be provided. In determining what is a reasonable amount, consideration must be given to the play/exercise space required by children and young adults, and to the recreational needs of occupiers of the property for purposes such as gardening, growing vegetables (there is no allotment space in the NA), entertaining guests, and relaxation.

5.6.6 Policy 6: Quality design

5.6.6.1 Proposals for new development within the Plan area must seek to preserve and enhance the special character of the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Plan area, as detailed in the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Character Assessment, 2016 by:

- (a) Recognising and reinforcing the distinct local character in relation to building heights, massing, spacing, positioning, layout, orientation, and materials.**
- (b) Where it is appropriate, incorporating high quality landscaping to mitigate the visual impact of the development and to ensure that proposals merge into the existing green and wooded context. Where appropriate, landscaping schemes should seek to include native species.**
- (c) Incorporating high quality materials which maximise the aesthetic quality of the scheme.**
- (d) Ensuring new boundary treatments reflect the distinct local character in relation to materials and design, or retaining open plan layouts where boundaries are unenclosed.**
- (e) Preserving existing views out towards the surrounding wooded landscape, and where possible, creating new views along streets and/or open spaces to the surrounding wooded landscape.**
- (f) Incorporating design principles which result in secure and safe environments, and minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour. Streets and pedestrian/cycle links should be faced by active frontages and benefit from good levels of natural surveillance.**
- (g) Providing external amenity space sufficient for the reasonable needs of the residents.**
- (h) Progressing sensitively designed and appropriately located waste and recycling storage and vehicle parking provision, which must be considered early in the design process and properly designed into the scheme rather than be left as an afterthought.**
- (i) Providing wherever possible facilities such as high-speed broadband to facilitate home working and similar economic activities.**

5.7 New Shops

- 5.7.1 While there is limited scope for the development of retail outlets in the NA it is recognised that such development may be proposed. If they are for small shop units (i.e. less than 250 sq.m gross floorspace) to meet the needs of residents (and are small enough not to impact on existing local centres or the Town Centre), such proposals may be welcomed, provided that the existing valued character of the NA is protected and, wherever possible, enhanced. It is also important that they are located, designed and operated so as not to cause parking or other amenity problems in the local residential area.
- 5.7.2 Wycombe District Council's '*Shop Fronts & Shop Signs – A guide to their role in the conservation of historic character in town centres*', is not only applicable to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Its principles of good design apply to all areas of the District, including Daws Hill, in recognising the impact shop fronts can have on local character and the importance of well-considered design and detailing.

5.7.3 Policy 7: New Shops

- 5.7.3.1. Proposals for new shop(s) in the Plan area must demonstrate that the impacts/effects on the residential community in terms of public transport, parking arrangements and buildings/facilities are properly considered and mitigated by appropriate measures.**
- 5.7.3.2 Any shop front should be of a high quality design and where possible improve the character of their local environment. The design of frontages must complement the architectural design of the rest of the building where that building has historic or architectural merit. Signs for shop fronts must be well-designed at a suitable scale and if illuminated should be lit appropriately and discreetly.**

5.8 Scale of Local Non-residential Development

- 5.8.1 The NA is predominantly defined by its domestic character and primarily comprises residential development alongside a variety of supporting community, commercial and employment uses. All new development in the Plan area should seek to retain this character and balance, and should ensure that the residential nature of the NA is not diminished.
- 5.8.2 Given the major concerns of residents over the problems associated with vehicle use, all proposals for non-residential development must seek to minimise the impact that their increased vehicle use will produce.

5.8.3 Policy 8: Scale of Local Non-Residential Development

5.8.3.1 Proposals for non-residential development in the Plan area, including leisure, health and education facilities, will be supported particularly where:

(a) they are easily accessible via a variety of modes of sustainable transport and must not give rise to significant additional trips by private car. Accordingly, any proposal must demonstrate how it would not impact adversely on existing on-street parking or local highway safety.

(b) commercial and business uses are small in scale, and should not create a new focal point in the Plan area that would encourage greater levels of commercial activity or significant traffic movements in future. They should also be able to demonstrate that they will not impact adversely on existing residential amenity.

6. Adoption of the Plan

- 6.1 The Plan, when adopted, will have legal status and allow DHNF and residents greater influence over any development within the Neighbourhood Area. The Plan's requirements must be taken into consideration by developers and the Local Planners alike.
- 6.2 While the responsibility for granting planning permission resides with WDC, DHNF will work closely with them and BCC to promote the values of the Vision Statement, and to endeavour to tackle the issues facing the residents of the NA and the wider Wycombe area in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

7. Thanks and Acknowledgements

- 7.1 The Committee wishes to thank all residents and Council staff who have provided input and helped to produce the Plan.
- 7.2 Special thanks are due to the following professional advisers, without whose help this Plan could not have been produced:

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