

Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group - 24 March 2026

Item 7: Halton-with Aughton and Scotforth Rural Parish Neighbourhood Plans Update

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the 2011 Localism Act as a method for communities to address planning matters at a very local level. The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan (Plan) involves a considerable amount of work, usually by a parish council or sub-group, and engagement with the community. Lancaster City Council (the Council) supports the process and provides feedback on the evolution of the Plans.
- 1.2 Once a parish council has drafted a Plan there are formal stages that it must go through. The first of these is a statutory consultation run by a parish council (Regulation 14) for six weeks. The responses, including an informal officer response from the Council, are considered by the parish council and, where appropriate, the Plan will be amended to address issues raised. A Plan is then submitted to the Council. At this point the Council carries out a statutory consultation (Regulation 16) for 6 weeks. Following this engagement an Individual Cabinet Member Decision report (ICMD) will seek authority from the portfolio holder to submit the Plan for examination. An Examiner will be appointed by the parish council and the Council from an approved list of Independent Examiners. The Examiner will consider whether the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 1.3 The basic conditions are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act and are as follows:
 - a. The plan is in conformity with national policy and advice.
 - b. The plan contributes to sustainable development.
 - c. The plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority.
 - d. The plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.
 - e. The plan does not breach the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, which set out the habitat regulation assessment process for land use plans, including consideration of the effect on habitats sites.
- 1.4 The role of the examiner is to consider the Plan, supporting documents and any written representations received during the Regulation 16 consultation. They may decide to carry out a public hearing, but none of our previous Examiners have called for one. The Examiner will issue a report which will recommend changes where they consider these necessary to ensure the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 1.5 The parish council is usually expected to amend the Plan as recommended by the Examiner. The Council must then decide what action to take. If parish council and Council wish to make a decision that differs from the Examiner, a 6-week consultation must take place and in some circumstances the Plan should be referred back to the Examiner. In all the cases so far, the necessary amendments have been made and the Plan has proceeded in accordance with the Examiners report.

1.6 At this point an ICMD report will seek authority to carry out a Plan referendum and a parish referendum is undertaken. If over 50% of the votes cast are in favour of the Plan coming into force, it is the Council who must bring the plan into force. At this point, Full Council will be asked to resolve to 'make' the Plan and it will then form part of the Development Plan for the district.

2. Halton-with Aughton Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Halton-with-Aughton Parish Council (Parish Council) has been working on a Plan for the parish since the area was designated in 2015. They carried out a considerable amount of engagement over that time and have produced various versions of the Plan. The Parish Council carried out a pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation between 15th July and 8th September 2024. Some amendments/clarifications were made to the Plan following the consultation and the Plan was formally submitted to the Council on 28th January 2025.

2.2 The Council carried out the statutory Regulation 16 consultation for 6 weeks between 10th March and 28th April 2025. An ICMD report was produced to request authorisation for the submission of the Plan for independent examination, alongside endorsement of the Council's response to the Regulation 16 Consultation. Subsequently the Plan was submitted for examination in June 2026.

2.3 The main issues raised by the Examiner during the examination process were in relation to Policy HA-5 Flooding. The Examiner proposed quite significant amendments to this policy which were set out in a letter, inviting Council and Parish Council comments. Whilst the Council and Parish Council sought to retain the proposed principles (subject to a few wording changes) set out in the policy, particularly with regard to the 3 areas of land safeguarded for potential flood mitigation measures, the Examiner's report received on 31st July 2025, recommended a re-write of this policy and the removal of these safeguarded areas from the policy. Overall, the Examiner's report did conclude that subject to the specified modifications, the Plan met the Basic Conditions and other requirements, and it was therefore recommended that the Plan proceed to referendum. The Parish Council made the changes set out in the Examiner's report, another ICMD report was produced, with a decision to proceed to referendum made on 11th December 2025. The Plan went to local referendum on Thursday 5th March 2026. The results were in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan, with 90.88% for and 9.11% of votes against. The parish turnout rate was 16.87%. The Council will now look to take the Neighbourhood Plan to Full Council on 22nd April 2026 to seek adoption and 'make' the Plan.

2.4 The Plan is supported by:

- A Basic Conditions Statement (statement by the Parish to confirm how the Plan meets the basic conditions in their opinion).
- A Consultation Statement.
- Jacobs Flood Risk Management Study 2020
- Landscape Character Assessment.
- Local Green Space Report.

- Lune Valley Community Land Trust Housing Needs Survey Report 2019.
- Screening Reports for the Habitats Regulation Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Council officers produced these for the Parish).

2.5 The Plan and supporting documents can be found here: [Neighbourhood Plan Documents | Halton-with-Aughton Parish Council](#)

2.6 The Plan includes the following planning policies:

- Policy HA-1: Conserving & Enhancing Local Landscape Character
- Policy HA-2: Protecting and Enhancing Wildlife and Geodiversity
- Policy HA-3 - Area of Separation
- Policy HA-4 - Local Green Spaces
- Policy HA-5 - Flooding
- Policy HA-6 - Protecting Historic Character
- Policy HA-7 - Meeting Local Housing Needs
- Policy HA-8 - Halton Urban Development
- Policy HA-9 - High Quality and Sustainable Design
- Policy HA-10 - Active Travel
- Policy HA-11 - Community Facilities

2.7 The Plan supports the policies of the Local Plan and adds locally specific designations and criteria. Policy HA-1 proposes to identify 'Landscape Character Areas' and sets out criteria for development within each area. Policy HA-3 provides further support for the Area of Separation set out in policy EN6 of the Lancaster District (Part 1: Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD) Local Plan. Policy HA-4 seeks to designate 5 'Local Green Spaces' which are considered to be demonstrably special to the local community. Development in these areas would only be permitted in very special circumstances. Policy HA-7 seeks to ensure development meets the needs of the Parish and provides support for affordable, smaller dwellings of up to 3 bedrooms. Policy HA-10 proposes to include specific criteria to promote active travel and improvements to public rights of way. Policy HA-11 seeks to protect 14 community facilities within the parish.

2.8 The Plan concludes with a series of community aspirations, set out in the Annex. These are not planning policies but could be used to inform off-site improvements and contributions from development where these meet the tests for obligations/condition.

3. Scotforth Rural Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 The Scotforth Rural Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated in January 2023. The Scotforth Rural Parish Council (Parish Council) has worked on the Plan since then, engaging with the community and other stakeholders. They have produced various draft policies and officers have provided support and advice through the process.

3.2 The pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) took place from 17th February until 31st March 2025. Taking account of the comments received to this consultation the Plan was subsequently revised and submitted to the Council on 6th August 2025. Under Regulation 16, the Council formally consulted on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan for just over 6 weeks, from Thursday 2nd October to 17th November 2025. The Council itself provided a response to this via an ICMD report, in which no significant concerns were raised. It was recognised that the

Neighbourhood Plan policies build upon those in the adopted Local Plan and seeks to deliver one of the principles set out in Policy SG1 of the Strategic Policies & Land Allocations DPD by defining an Area of Separation around Bailrigg village.

3.3 The examination of the Plan commenced in January 2026. The Examiner has issued a series of questions and both the Council, and the Parish Council have submitted responses to these. We await to hear further from the Examiner.

3.4 The Plan is supported by:

- A Basic Conditions Statement (statement by the Parish to confirm how the Plan meets the basic conditions in their opinion).
- A Consultation Statement.
- Landscape Character Assessment Report (September 2024)
- Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing Report – Part 1 (Walking, Riding and Driving) (August 2024)
- Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing Report – Part 2 (Cycling and Planning Principles) (September 2024)
- Environment and Biodiversity Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland Report
- Burrow Heights Ward Drumlin Report (June 2025)
- Technical Note – Existing Drainage Scoping Report (June 2024)
- Design Guide and Codes Report (November 2024)
- Screening Reports for the Habitats Regulation Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Council officers produced these for the Parish).

3.5 The Plan, Design Code and supporting documents can be found here:

<https://scotforthparishcouncil.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

3.6 The Plan includes the following planning policies:

- Policy SR1: Bailrigg Village Area of Separation and Development Boundary.
- Policy SR2: Small Scale Development in Burrow Heights and Lower Burrow Local Character Area.
- Policy SR3: Landscape Character.
- Policy SR4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland.
- Policy SR5: Wildlife and Biodiversity.
- Policy SR6: Responding to Local Character.
- Policy SR7: Sustainable Design.
- Policy SR8: Reducing Flood Risk and Improving Drainage.
- Policy SR9: Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding.

3.7 Of particular interest are policies SR1 and SR2. Policy SR1 proposes to designate an area of separation around Bailrigg Village to protect openness and visual amenity. It also identifies a development boundary around the village within which development that meets local need and is sensitive to heritage assets will be supported. Policy SR2 supports small scale infill development in the Burrow Heights and Lower Burrow Heights Character Areas, where it meets evidenced local needs and subject to criteria relating to landscape and built character and

heritage. It also seeks to ensure development avoids drumlin's upper slopes, summit and skyline above the 50m contour line. Various policies refer to the design codes and set out design criteria for development.