

## Appendix 2

### Neighbourhood Plan Examiner, Natural and Environment 4.20 – 4.26

#### Natural and Historic Environment

4.20 The Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) undertaken in 2015 and contained in Appendix 3 to the plan presents a very thorough assessment of the Marton neighbourhood planning area and its assets, in the context of the National Character Assessment and Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment. The LSCA identifies key viewpoints within the village and across the Cheshire Plains. It has considered the history of the village, features of biological interest, woodlands and hedges, heritage assets and features of interest on buildings (such as half-timbered elevations and thatched roofs), water features and footpaths and bridleways. The professional assessment is complemented by commentary on residents' views as to what they like or dislike about the parish.

4.21 The content of the LSCA is rightly embedded in the body of the neighbourhood plan, as it provides a robust and thorough evidential Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, Regency Offices, 3 Portwall Lane, Bristol BS1 6NB Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 0100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84 14 document. Policies RCD3, RCD5, RCD9 and RCD10 of the neighbourhood plan expect new development to be in keeping with existing buildings in the village and fit in with the prevailing scale, density and rural character. Those policies, and policies to protect the environment, PE8, PE9 and PE13, refer to the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA). The Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance, Appendix 1, is referenced in Policy RCD3 and Policy RCD7.

4.22 The NPPF explains that sustainable development has an environmental role contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. The core principles of the NPPF (paragraph 17) refer to securing high quality design, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving communities within it, and conserving heritage assets. Section 12 addresses conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and paragraph 132 sets out the significance of listed buildings and their settings. Section 11 gives detailed policy for conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

4.23 Saved policies from the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan include policies for landscape protection and enhancement to conserve and enhance the diversity of landscape character (NE2), to conserve and enhance rural landscapes through the creation and restoration of hedgerows, woodland etc. (NE3), and to seek to retain and enhance existing woodlands. Overall, I consider that the Marton Village Neighbourhood Plan places appropriate emphasis on conserving and enhancing its natural, built and historic assets, having regard to the NPPF and in general conformity with the Local Plan.

4.24 Policy PE4 of the plan states it is essential that views to the mature sycamore within the paddock off School Lane are retained, and Policy PE7 seeks to preserve ancient hedgerows and valued trees. However, the sycamore tree is suffering from decay, and is no longer protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). At the time of my site visit, this tree in the centre of a field where sheep were grazing looked green and healthy, and provided an attractive feature in the centre of the village. Nevertheless, I consider that the plan should be modified to clarify the current situation regarding the TPO and recognise that this landmark tree has a limited life.

4.25 My attention was also drawn to the appeal statement from Cheshire East Council's Landscape Officer for the proposed development on School Lane, ref. 15/2274M. This stated that development of the site, being the green space to which Policy PE4 relates, would not have any significant landscape or visual impacts. It was noted that the site had no formal designation for landscape protection. I accept that the green space at the centre of the village is enclosed by roads and housing, so that its development would not affect the wider landscape or have a significant visual impact on the countryside outside the village. However, saved Policy RT2 of Macclesfield Borough Local plan states that open spaces in residential areas should be protected from development and enhanced as appropriate. Policies SD1, Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd, Regency Offices, 3 Portwall Lane, Bristol BS1 6NB Registered in England and Wales. Company Reg. No. 0100118. VAT Reg. No. 237 7641 84 15 SD2 and SE6 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan continue this protective theme.

4.26 The last sentence of Marton's Visual Amenity, Page 24 of the neighbourhood plan, highlights "shorter range views over the paddock in the heart of the village ... enjoyed by the residents who live in the surrounding houses." I consider that the green space is a visually attractive feature for pedestrians and road users on School Lane and Oak Lane as well as for residents, whether or not the mature sycamore tree remains there. I note that the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the planning application refers to provision of on-site open space, and the proposed layout shows a "village green/community open space" area around the existing mature sycamore tree. There appears to be recognition that some open space in this prominent location should be retained, even if housing development is permitted.