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Copied to Eleanor Huddleston and Gillian Dobson, Lancaster City Council

Dear Mr Burton

Scotforth Rural Neighbourhood Development Plan Examination

Scotforth Parish Council - Responses to Examiner's Questions

Thank you for your questions regarding the Scotforth Rural Neighbourhood Plan (SRNP). Please find appended to this letter the responses from Scotforth Parish Council, prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and approved by Scotforth Parish Council on 18th February 2026.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Whiteway
Clerk to the Parish Council

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Scotforth Rural Neighbourhood Development Plan Examination

Scotforth Parish Council - Responses to Examiner's Questions

There are a number of points on which further clarification from Scotforth Parish Council would be helpful (and any additional comments from Lancaster City Council on these would also be welcome):

1. **Has there been any process for preparing and consulting on the evidence base provided with the neighbourhood plan, including the Landscape Character Assessment and Design Guides and Code, beyond being documents accompanying the Plan itself during public consultation, and if so then what was the result?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The evidence base documents were all published on the Parish Council's website during the preparation of the Plan and comments have been invited at key consultation stages of the plan making process. There was not a separate consultation process for either of the two documents, but they were published in draft form prior to and during the informal consultation on the Draft Plan and finalised for submission following the Regulation 14 formal consultation. Local publicity, including the NDP web pages signposted stakeholders to the relevant parts of the website where the documents could be viewed. They were also included in exhibition material at the public drop in events at Lancaster University.

The responses to Issues and Options consultation at the start of the Plan process (summer 2023) demonstrated local stakeholder support for local design policies related to built form and landscape character / natural environment (see responses to Questions 5 and 6 in the questionnaire, and Appendices 3 and 4 in the Consultation Statement). In response to this support the Parish Council commissioned the two evidence base documents, the **Landscape Character Assessment and Evidence Base to define an Area of Separation in Scotforth** and **Scotforth Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide and Codes** to underpin and provide more detail to SRNP policies.

Various iterations of the two documents were published on the website as they were revised. The first draft of the Landscape Character Assessment was provided in February 2024 and the Design Codes document in March 2024. Both documents were shared with Lancaster City Council (LCC) alongside the emerging draft plan and comments were provided in March 2024 (see Appendix 5 of the Consultation Statement). Comments and suggestions were made by members of the steering group who are all local residents and have detailed local knowledge of the neighbourhood area. The comments were considered by the Steering Group with their consultants and revisions made.

Prior to undertaking the Regulation 14 consultation the draft SRNP and supporting documents were published for an informal consultation, including a meeting specifically for all known landowners and developers on 25/10/2024, which the principal landowners attended.

Overall, the documents were revised several times, and each iteration was published on the website. Please refer to the Consultation Statement Appendix 6: Publicity for Informal Consultation on Emerging Draft Plan, October 2024, and Appendix 13 Screenshots of Scotforth Parish Council website for the Regulation 14 consultation.

The design guidance and codes were copied into Appendix 4 of the SRNP and some final minor changes were made following advice from LCC prior to submission.

- 1. Have there been any changes between the pre-submission (December 2024) and submitted Plan which raise issues relating to the SEA and Habitats Regulations screening assessments that could result in a different judgement?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

None known. Policy SR5 was added to the Plan on the recommendation of LCC following earlier advice from Natural England. For more information please also refer to LCC who prepared the SEA and HRA documents on behalf of the Parish Council.

- 3. Map 4 - what is the source of the information provided?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Members of the steering group undertook site visits to survey and identify the hedgerows and trees which were then digitised on Map 4 by planning consultants Kirkwells. Initial survey work was undertaken by a Geography student volunteer at Lancaster University and then completed by two steering group members.

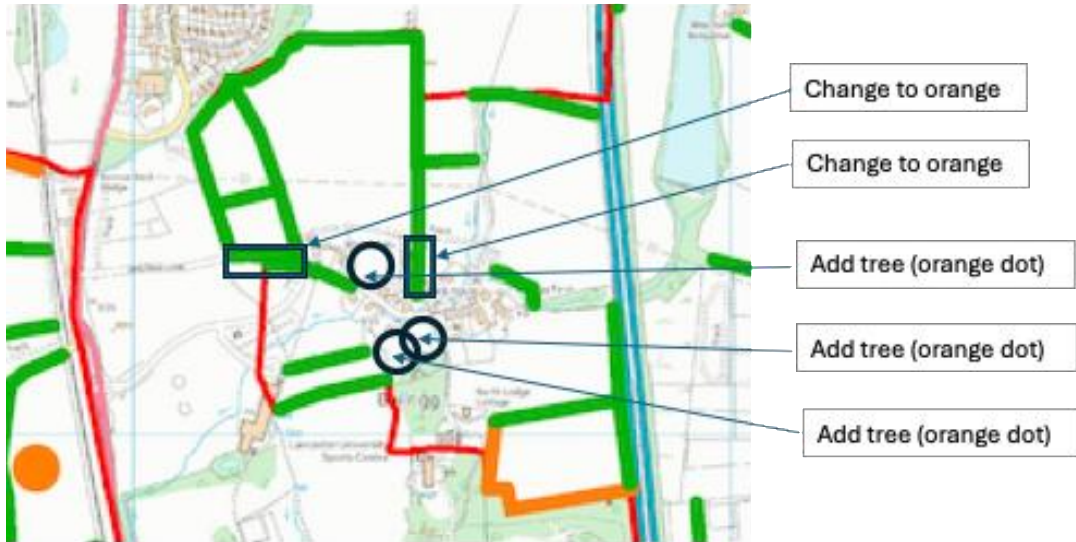
- 4. Policy SR4 - is the reference in part 3. to "veteran trees" and do these relate to the "stand alone trees" on Map 4?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The standalone trees in Map 4 are considered to be veteran trees and are of significant ecological and landscape value. There are other veteran trees in private gardens and within hedgerows that are not specifically marked on the map. In addition, a small number of veteran trees around Bailrigg Village that were subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) applications were not marked on Map 4 but have now been added in the Revised Map 4 (detail of changes provided below). Should a planning application come

forward that affects a veteran tree, whether marked or not on Map 4, then the Parish Council will request **that** the tree is, where practical, protected as a result of policy SR4.

The Woodland Trust provides a good description of a veteran tree, See <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/what-we-record-and-why/what-we-record/veteran-trees/>. This has been considered by the Steering Group as part of this work.



5. Policy SR4 - what is the evidence and justification for replacement trees at a ratio of 3:1 and replacement hedgerows of double length?

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Please refer to LCC's Tree Policy:

(<https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/trees/tree-policy/>):

'4. Where trees are agreed to be removed in order to accommodate an approved development the applicant will be required to submit for approval a new landscape scheme that will provide a minimal replacement ratio of 3:1 (3x new trees for each mature tree removed). All new landscape schemes must also include an appropriate maintenance programme to include: weed control, watering regime, checking, adjustment and removal of support systems, mulching and replacement of any trees/plants that fail to establish during the initial 5 or 10-year period post planting'

This was discussed and agreed with LCC. LCC suggested at emerging Draft Plan stage that the wording of the policy should be amended to refer to the scale of development and this change was subsequently made to the Policy.

The hedgerow length policy was shared with LCC and is consistent their policy (DM45) objective of *"Where possible, opportunities should be also sought to extend these valuable ecological networks by increasing and enhancing hedgerow cover"*. Hedges tend to mature quicker than trees and hence the 2:1 ratio rather than 3:1 has been proposed. Policy SR4 is also consistent with the government strategy of increasing woodland by 16% by 2050.

6. Policy SR7 - what is the evidence and justification for the "preference is towards improved sustainability" in paragraph 5 and the examples promoting community sustainability in paragraph 6

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The wording in the Policy in Paragraph 5 relating to the preference was prepared to provide clarification should there be conflict between alignment with the street scene and optimal orientation for sustainable design. The members of the Steering Group were concerned that development should have regard to the importance of sustainability at all times and that this is a key priority for the location and siting of any new buildings in the area.

In relation to community sustainability there is an existing very strong sense of community in the parish and future development will be expected to contribute to local community and social needs to help ensure these networks are maintained and strengthened. Examples of "community sustainability" would be to promote a variety of housing that would be suitable for the range of residents. Specific recent examples of planning applications that the Parish Council have commented favourably upon have involved building annexes that enabled young families to affordably remain in the area, close to their parents (see LCC planning portal reference 22/01170/FUL and 25/00387/FUL).

7. Map 7 - what is the source of the information provided, and can the boundaries of the Parcels A-K be provided? What is the gold line in Map 7 which is not included in the Key?

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The sources of the information include the Landscape Character Assessment Appendix A, figure 9 and Evidence Base to define an Area of Separation in Scotforth and follow up site visits, surveys and analysis by members of the steering group. The details of the assessment are set out in Appendix 2.

The boundaries of parcels C, D, F, G, I, J are existing field hedges or the safety zone of the power lines. The boundaries encompassing parcels B and E, and parcels A and H are also existing hedges. These boundaries reflect clear, unambiguous landscape features.

LCC, in its decision regarding planning application 21/00506/OUT, established that its policies would only accommodate new developments that front directly onto Bailrigg Lane in order to be consistent with the streetscene. This principle is the basis for the boundaries between parcels B and E, and A and H – these straight-line boundaries are aligned to the rear boundaries of adjacent properties, with parcels A and B accessible and developable whilst parcels E and H are inaccessible and non-developable. Parcel K, bounded by the gold line, is the extent of housing proposed in a Parameter Plan accompanying Outline planning application 19/01135/OUT for 644 houses across the whole tranche of farmland between South Lancaster conurbation and Lancaster University. The applicant, Gladman, accepted the principle of an Area of Separation but their Parameter Plan placed some housing in some areas east of, and overlooking, the Bailrigg Farm community. The application was refused by the LCC and the appeal was dismissed at the public hearing but subsequently granted by the Court of Appeal. Area K is therefore included in Map 7 to illustrate where developers concur with, and disagree with, the Area of Separation proposed in the SRNP. The entire "Gladman" land has however been subsequently purchased by the NHS as a potential site for a new hospital that may come forward beyond 2038, but for which no planning application, indicative plan or public consultation has emerged.

- 8. There is an expectation in national Planning Practice Guidance that neighbourhood plans should *"be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared"* (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306,NPPG) and that its policies should *"serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant)"* (paragraph 16, NPPF). What is distinct to the neighbourhood area and not already addressed in the Local Plan or NPPF in Policy SR5, Policy SR7 and Policy SR8?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Overall, the SRNP policies have been drafted to provide local detail and specific requirements so that developments in the area respond positively to the characteristics of the area and address local people's concerns. The design codes document and landscape character assessment were prepared following analysis of local character, and these are used to inform the relevant policies in SRNP. Local characteristics such as views, trees, hedgerows etc were identified by local residents and members of the steering group and are considered to be important contributors to local character. Similarly, opportunities to improve accessibility and in particular to reduce reliance on cars and encourage walking and cycling are drawn from local residents' particular knowledge and understanding of the area. Overall the Plan is a response to local people's comments and ideas for protecting and enhancing the area as it sees change and development over the plan period.

This is in accordance with NPPF paragraph 30 which sets that '*Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan*' and paragraph 132 which advises '*neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.*'

LCC advised that policies SR5, SR7 and SR8 were needed to complement the focus of the SRNP upon local development in the rural context. Whilst each of these policies contains elements of the LCC DM policies they also contain further detail concerning elements that residents raised about ensuring development yields local benefits. For example:

- Policy SR5 specifies that where a development cannot deliver 10% BNG in situ that the BNG offsetting should be sourced from within the NP area.
- Policy SR7 specifically references the Design Code which is unique to the NP area. It also provides guidance on conflicting priorities (see response to previous question on SR7) and requirements to consider community sustainability. In addition, it includes an obligation for major development schemes to support improvements in local community infrastructure and facilities for adjacent settlements wherever reasonable and practical. This latter requirement ensures that existing settlements may secure betterment to infrastructure arising from an adjacent major development scheme at marginal cost rather than incur the full cost of a stand-alone infrastructure scheme for just an existing settlement.
- Policy SR8 concerns flood risk that was raised by residents at the early stages of the SRNP; Paragraph 3 of the policy justification highlights areas of regular flooding. Central to policy SR8 is that new developments must consider how they can contribute solutions to alleviating existing problems: "*Proposals must not exacerbate existing, recent and historical drainage and flooding problems in the area and where possible, should provide a betterment to reduce flood risk.*".

Hence, SRNP is a highly distinctive plan which reflects local detail, character and community concerns. It has been prepared by a committed and knowledgeable group of local residents and parish councillors and has been informed by responses to multiple community consultation and engagement activity.

9. I should additionally welcome any comments from Scotforth Parish Council on the representations made on the submitted Plan.

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The Parish Council has considered every representation made during the Regulation 16 consultation period but will confine its responses to the Examiner to the principal objections and comments made by the following consultees:

Lancaster City Council Response, October 2025

1. The SRNP Steering Group on behalf of the Parish Council has worked hard to engage with LCC throughout the plan making process and to address LCC's concerns and suggestions wherever possible. The Parish Council is pleased to note that this pragmatic approach is recognised in LCC's response (see for example para 4.5). The Parish Council welcomes LCC's findings that SRNP is in conformity with local plan policies and meets the requirements of the basic conditions (para 4.24). The Parish Council is willing to continue to work closely with LCC to address any outstanding matters of concern. These include the following:
2. Para 4.9 – The steering group is happy to provide some additional wording in the form of a conclusion to Appendix 2, specifically reproducing the summary section (6) of the Landscape Character Assessment report.
3. Paras 4.13 and 4.14 – The Parish Council agrees that the wording of the first paragraph of Policy SR2 could be amended to something like:

'Development proposals should retain and enhance all hedgerows, trees and woodland including those identified on Map 4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland as part of important local Green Infrastructure. **Where this is not possible, additional planting, replanting and replacements will be required and this will be determined on a case-by-case basis when considering individual planning applications.**'
4. Para 4.19 – Maps 5 & 6 - The Parish Council would welcome assistance with mapping from LCC to improve the clarity of all maps. Improvements are discussed in more detail below in the response to the Examiner's questions of 6th February.
5. Para 4.22 – Monitoring. The Parish Council accepts that further wording could be added to say that the Plan will be monitored on an annual basis by the Parish Council. The Parish Council would welcome support and advice on this matter.

Stantec, 31 March 2025

The Parish Council does not accept that SRNP conflicts with the strategic policies in the Local Plan. Please refer to the LCC response above which confirms this view. The Basic Conditions Statement explains in detail how the Plan meets the required basic conditions.

In relation to credible evidence, the Parish Council commissioned additional studies to support the evidence base of design policies in SRNP, namely the Landscape Character Assessment and Evidence Base to define an Area of Separation in Scotforth and Scotforth Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide and Codes, both of which were prepared by independent consultants. The evidence base is further enhanced by detailed research, assessments and site visits undertaken by volunteer members of the steering group and set out in a number of reports which are published on the SRNP pages of the Parish Council's website. It is important to note also that relevant evidence supporting the Local Plan are also referred to in the Plan, including Lancaster City Council's 'Meeting Housing Need Supplementary Planning Document' [Adopted February 2022 and amended January 2025] (see pp27-28) and A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire, Landscape Character Assessment, 2000. The Consultation Statement sets out in detail the multiple stages of public consultation and engagement undertaken to allow local people to help shape and inform the Plan's policies.

Bailrigg Area of Separation

The Parish Council does not accept the suggestion that a more nuanced approach should be taken using screening and landscaping. The identification of an Area of Separation is supported in strategic policies in the Local Plan (See Local Plan Part One Policy SG1: Lancaster South Broad Location for Growth including Bailrigg Garden Village). The justification for identifying this area is provided in the Landscape Character Assessment report with further detail set out in Appendix 2.

The Parish Council does not accept that Policy SR2 "*attempts to surreptitiously apply an 'area of separation' policy under the guise of protecting of the local landscape.*". The Policy (SR2) will be applied to small scale development focussed on the existing settlement and it is appropriate to suggest that this should comprise small scale infill and rounding off development which meets local needs.

The Parish Council were advised by LCC that SRNP should not include any references to documents supporting the former proposed Bailrigg Garden Village as this has proposal has been withdrawn. Therefore, it is not appropriate to refer to the Arcadis report prepared in 2018 in responses to the NDP.

SRNP policies have been prepared to guide proposals for major and small-scale developments. Where the policies apply only to small scale development this is set out in the Policy (eg SR2 and SR6).

Marrons

The Parish Council finds the points raised are largely repetitious of previous comments submitted and therefore the response within the Consultation Statement still applies. However, there are two new assertions made by the consultee that the Parish Council does not accept:

- Point 5 - The SRNP does not propose any Area of Separation (AoS) "stretching west" in the Burrow Heights area. Policy SR1 only defines the AoS for Bailrigg Village, whilst Policy SR2 only defines how development occurs within the existing pattern of settlement of Burrow Heights to preserve and protect the top of Burrow Heights drumlin and the character of this area. Policy SR2 recognises and protects the unique feature of Burrow Heights Drumlin that is unique to the character of the neighbourhood area.
- Point 7 - Paragraph 22.37 of the Local Plan part 1, referring the policy EN6 states: "It is the Council's intention to provide Area(s) of Separation in South Lancaster that will be identified via the Lancaster South Area Action Plan DPD." (underlined preamble omitted in Marrons' comments). This does not mean that the AoS must only be provided in the AAP; So, with the indefinite absence of its AAP LCC has agreed that the SRNP can provide the definition of the Area of Separation (AoS) for Bailrigg Village, to fulfil EN6 and provide clarity to developers and residents at Bailrigg.

10. It will be helpful to receive a response by 22 February or otherwise to be informed when it will be possible.

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

This response was drafted by the Steering Group on 12th February and circulated to and approved individually by parish councillors on 18th February 2026. Their decision will be recorded at the next Parish Council on 16th March 2026.

11. My current view is that a hearing will not be required.

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Noted.

12. These requests and the responses should be made publicly available, such as by being put online.

I may come back with further questions or requests as the Examination proceeds.

Thank you for supporting the process. It will be helpful if all correspondence is shared between the local planning authority, the parish council and myself.

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Noted. The response will be published on the website once approved by the Parish Council.

Further Examiner's Questions 6th February 2026

Further to my requests below may I ask Scotforth Parish Council:

- 1. What is the source of the content of Appendix 3 on improving accessibility and how does it relate to the report "Promoting Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing"? Policy SR9 says the content of Appendix 3 is "set out" in this document but it does not appear?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Appendix 3 is an extract from the conclusion of the report Promoting Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing Part 2*, pages 8-9. (*Erroneously described as Part 1 in the submitted SRNP.) The full and correct reference will be made in Appendix 3.

The wording of SR9 could be changed to make it clearer that it is the design principles that are set out in Appendix 3, and not the entire Promoting Accessibility, Health and Wellbeing report.

- 2. Whether all the proposals on Map 5 for new connections are intended also to appear on Map 6 as part of the vision?**

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

Map 5 focuses on how footpaths and bridleways could be connected, whilst Map 6 also includes how improvements to road safety as part of the overall vision of improving accessibility. However, as discussed below, the adoption of just Map 6 may provide more clarity to the SRNP

2. To review both Maps to address inconsistencies in the information presented - an example being Map 5 shows a connection near Langthwaite Houses as a "Signpost 'pedestrians in roadway'" and Map 6 shows it as "Create footpath in verge"

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

There were some minor inconsistencies between the development of Map 5 and Map 6 which will be eliminated by the proposal to just use Map 6 throughout.

3. To consider whether it would be possible to combine Maps 5 and 6 to show both existing routes and improvements which also include the proposed new connections

Scotforth Parish Council Response:

The observation is accepted. A revised Map 6 with minor clarifications is attached and proposed. Its adoption will require references to Map 5 to be re-referenced. Please refer to revised Map 6 below::

Map 6 revised to provide more granularity of "pedestrians in roadway" routes

