Minutes of the Arden Neighbourhood Forum Meeting

5th March 2026 – 7pm – The Red Cow, High Street, Market Harborough.

Present:

John Fannon (JF), Steve Jones (SJ), Don West (DW), Lynn Thacker (LT), Sarah Nimmo (SN), Penny Fannon (PF), Pippa Underwood (PU)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Carol Thay (HDC) and Cllr Peter James.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the previous forum meeting have been reviewed and there are no outstanding actions.

3. NHP progress update and next steps

- JF has completed the latest draft of the NHP. This was updated to include updated references to the latest NPPF (Aug 2026) and has been reviewed by Your Locale, with any significant comments incorporated into the draft (v0-9). The draft includes various maps and appendices that form the evidence base for the policies.
- A link to the draft NHP and appendices was shared with members prior to the meeting.
- The 4 NHFs in Market Harborough have continued to collaborate on the NHPs to get them to completion. The other forums also have drafts that are being reviewed by Your Locale prior to going to the next stage.
- The next steps provided by Your Locale include:
    - Formal NHF approval.
    - Sending the draft to HDC for SEA (strategic environmental assessment) screening.
    - Starting the 6-week Regulation 14 consultation period.
- There is an intention, depending on readiness, for all forums to undertake the formal consultation at the same time and have a shared public event as part of the consultation. This should save cost and hopefully encourage community engagement.

4. Approval of Draft NHP for Reg 14 Consultation

- Regulation 14 consultation is the neighbourhood planning body's formal consultation on a draft neighbourhood plan. This gives stakeholders, including local residents and businesses, an opportunity to comment before it is formally submitted to the local planning authority.
- The latest draft (v0-9) was circulated prior to the meeting and a hard copy made available during the meeting for review.
- The forum voted to approve the draft NHP (v0-9). There were 7 votes in favour and 0 against.

Actions:

- JF to send the latest draft (v0-9) to HDC for SEA screening.

- JF to work with other forums to agree dates for the Reg 14 consultation and associated public event.

5. Other non-NHP updates

a) Town Council update

HDC has been progressing the CGR and is now in the final stages. A town council has been agreed in principle and HDC recently consulted on warding arrangements.

It was noted that the wider local government reorganisation (i.e. formation of a unitary authority) is currently postponed, but that this is unlikely to affect the formation of a Town Council.

Members of the NHFs agreed that a meeting should be arranged to discuss whether members would be interested in standing as town councillors and how best to encourage people to stand.

b) Ward Member Community Grants

There is a new "Ward Member" grant scheme available through HDC to support community projects in each Ward. Each member has a total of £35k available to allocate. Great Bowden and Arden Ward has two ward members (Cllrs Knowles and Anderson), so the total available would be £70k across the ward.

More details are available at:
https://www.harborough.gov.uk/info/20069/grants_for_communities/543/community_grant_fund

Arden NHF has some recommendations for local improvements in our NHP, but if anyone has other ideas for community projects in the Arden area, then we would be happy to discuss them. Please send your ideas to forum@arden-neighbourhood.org.

6. AOB

Other items discussed were as follows:

- SJ has been in discussions with LCC about possible improvements and modifications to the station approach. The forum has previously discussed ideas for improving the attractiveness of the station approach and also the junction between St. Mary's Road, Great Bowden Road and the station drop-off entrance.
- SJ also mentioned that buses operating in the town (HC & LC routes) will be free on Saturdays until Christmas. For more information see the following link:

  https://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/public-transport/autumn-and-winter-savings/participating-services/
- DW mentioned that there had not been much activity with regards to the Tiny Forest since it was created. Earthwatch had promised to arrange various events, but this hasn't materialised. JF will contact Earthwatch to see if there are any future events or activities planned. Note there is some information available at the following link, including details of how to become a "tree keeper".

  https://tinyforest.earthwatch.org.uk/tiny-forest-sites/637-headlands-park

- DW mentioned that the hedge on the boundary of 112 The Headlands has become quite large and if not cut back, restricts the view of vehicles turning right from The Headlands onto Great Bowden Road. It was noted that this was recently trimmed but could have been cut back further to improve visibility. JF suggested dropping a polite letter from the NHF to the owner asking for the hedge to be cut back further and offering assistance with this if needed.

  Actions:

  - JF to share details of free buses on FB group.
  - JF to contact Earthwatch about the Tiny Forest.
  - JF to drop a letter to the owner of 112 The Headlands regarding cutting back the hedge further.