

Firbeck Parish Council



Firbeck Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2026 -2041

Regulation 14 Draft Plan

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the draft Firbeck Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14 consultation version).

The Neighbourhood Plan is a type of planning document based on the views of our local community and the evidence of the housing, community and other development needs of the parish of Firbeck and the wider area. It is part of the Government's approach to planning, which aims to give local people more say about how their area develops.

We know that Firbeck is a wonderful place to live and visit. The aim is to make it even better, especially by guiding and shaping development, so that it conserves and, wherever possible, improves what makes the parish special.

The Plan has been prepared by a small Steering Group comprising parish councillors, other members of the local community and our planning consultant, Andrew Towleron.

I would especially like to thank my fellow members of the Steering Group, namely Phil Barraclough, Rachel Barraclough, Jackie Bruce, Nicky Blyth, Dave Butcher, Sally Coppen, Jane Crownshaw and Sue Pepper as well as the Chair of Firbeck Parish Council, Caroline Jopling, and its Clerk, Alan Evans. Also, to Valerie Oxley and Julia Colver for their invaluable support for the history of the parish and heritage sections.

I would also like to thank the officers and members of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the whole community for their help and input in the creation of this important document.

Special mention must be made of the funding body Locality. Without their support, this document could not have been produced to such a high standard.

This is the Regulation 14 'pre-submission' version of the Plan. The Parish Council is satisfied that it is a robust draft Plan and now invites residents, landowners, businesses, agencies and other people to give their views on it. Any comments received during this consultation period will be welcomed and considered by the Steering Group and the Parish Council when amending the Plan.

The Plan will then be submitted to Rotherham MBC for review and further consultation before submission to an Independent Examiner. If the Plan passes examination, it will be put to a referendum of local people where a simple majority in favour will mean that it is formally accepted as a statutory planning document.

The Pre-Submission Plan and supporting documents can be viewed on the Firbeck Parish Council's website at [Home- Firbeck Parish Council](http://Home-Firbeck Parish Council). Printed copies of the Plan are available to view by arrangement with the clerk of the Parish via clerk@firbeckparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Plan will directly affect the community in which you live. We encourage you to take the opportunity to submit them in any of the following ways:

- Email your comments to: clerk@firbeckparishcouncil.gov.uk
- Send your comments to: Clerk of Firbeck Parish Council, c/o 15 Roddis Close, Dinnington, Sheffield, S25 2XH

Ian Barkley, Chair of the Firbeck Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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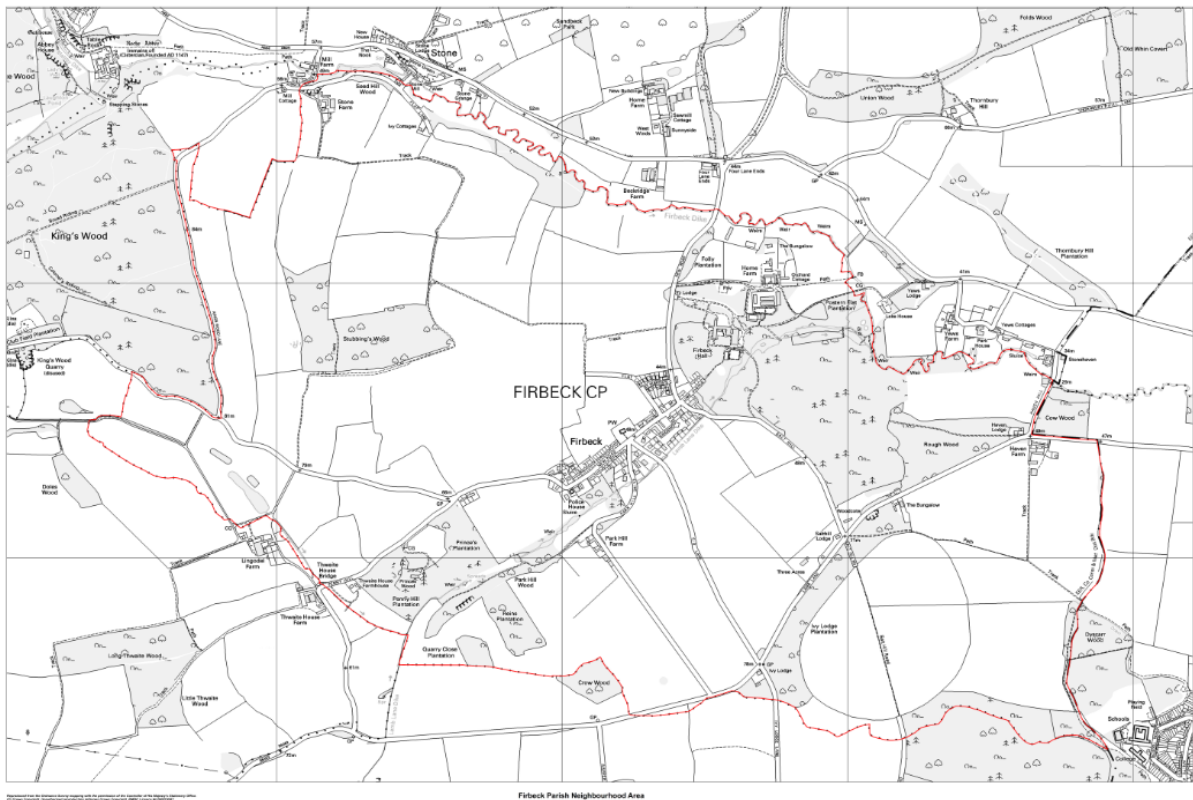
1. Background and Context

Introduction

1. This Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') sets out the planning framework for Firbeck Parish.
2. It covers the whole parish, known as the Firbeck Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area (see Figure 1 below).
3. A key part of the Government's localism agenda, a neighbourhood plan is a community-led document that gives local people a greater say in how their area develops. It can influence where new homes and businesses go, how new buildings and extensions should look, and which areas should be protected from unsuitable development.
4. Once adopted ('made'), it becomes part of the development plan for the local area and must be considered alongside local plans and other relevant policies when planning applications are assessed.
5. As the Government's official guidance states, '*Neighbourhood planning is designed to provide a powerful set of tools to ensure you get the right types of development in the right place for your community. Local residents and businesses are now in a position to make planning policies that reflect your priorities, deliver tangible local benefits and have real weight in the planning system*'¹.
6. The Plan has been prepared by a steering group on behalf of Firbeck Parish Council, made up of parish councillors, other local residents and planning consultants Andrew Towlerton Associates, supported by Firbeck Parish Council and others.
7. It draws on a wide range of evidence, including national and local planning policy, statistical data such as the 2021 Census and other reports and studies. Community consultation and evidence gathering have been central to its preparation, helping ensure it reflects local needs and priorities.
8. The Plan sets out objectives and policies for the parish's sustainable development. It aims to support development that meets local needs while protecting and enhancing Firbeck's distinctive character, built and natural environment, and strong sense of identity and community.
9. The Firbeck Neighbourhood Plan covers the period to 2041.
10. A neighbourhood plan is not prepared in isolation. Legislation requires both the Plan and its policies to follow a prescribed process and to be in general conformity with relevant national and borough-wide strategic planning policies.
11. The Plan will be reviewed regularly and may be updated over time to respond to changing needs and circumstances.

¹ Source: p.2 of the Power of Neighbourhood Planning ([The power of neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612312/The_power_of_neighbourhood_planning.pdf))
 Firbeck Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2026 – 2041) – Regulation 14 Draft Plan for Consultation

Figure 1: Firbeck Parish (the Neighbourhood Plan Area)



How the Plan Fits into the Planning System

12. The right for communities to prepare neighbourhood plans was established by the Localism Act 2011, which sets out the general rules for their preparation. One of the main requirements is that a neighbourhood plan must meet certain rules known as Basic Conditions² before it can come into force.
13. One of these Basic Conditions is that a neighbourhood plan must have regard to national policies and advice guidance issued by the Secretary of State. In particular, that contained in National Planning Policy Framework³ ('NPPF'), which sets out the Government's planning policies for plan-making (including neighbourhood plans) and for making decisions on development proposals in England and how these are expected to be applied. These Basic Conditions also require that neighbourhood plans should not include policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with the content of national planning policies.
14. The Basic Conditions also require that a neighbourhood must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the approved development plan covering the neighbourhood plan area.

² [Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-planning)

³ [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework)

15. In Firbeck Parish, the key local development planning document is the Rotherham Local Plan ('the Local Plan')⁴. The Local Plan consists of several documents that provide a long-term development strategy for Rotherham for the period 2013 to 2028, setting out '*...policies and proposals for new housing, shopping and employment, and how you travel in the area. The Local Plan is used to make planning decisions and decide planning applications.*'
16. The key elements of the Local Plan are contained in the Core Strategy. Adopted in 2014, this sets out the spatial strategy for the whole of Rotherham and '*identifies the broad locations for delivering new housing and employment, including provision for retail, leisure and community facilities; how much new development we need, where it should go and when it should happen*'.
17. Several strategic and other planning policies in the Local Plan are especially relevant to the parish. In particular, Policy CS4 in the Core Strategy defines the Green Belt boundary in Rotherham and protects land within it from inappropriate development. Within the Green Belt, development is subject to tight control and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The whole of Firbeck Parish lies within the Green Belt.
18. Paragraph 5.2.3 of the Core Strategy identifies Firbeck, along with several other settlements in the borough, as a 'Green Belt Village'. It states, '*Given their size and lack of local facilities, the strategy for villages within Rotherham's Green Belt is not to provide for any further development in these locations except where affordable housing proposals meet the requirements of Policy CS7 Housing Mix and Affordability.*'
19. Special mention should also be made to the Sites and Policies document. This forms part of the Local Plan and identifies the housing, employment and other development sites across the borough needed to meet the targets set out in the Core Strategy, alongside detailed policies to guide decisions on planning applications. It contains many policies and proposals that are important to the development of the parish.
20. Rotherham MBC has also produced Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPDs') that provide detailed policy guidance in support of the Local Plan and are relevant to this Plan. These SPDs include guidance on:
 - Householder Design Guide
 - Development in the Green Belt
 - Equal and Healthy Communities
 - Air Quality and Emissions
 - Developer Contributions
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Trees
 - Development in the Green Belt (revised)
21. These SPDs are available on the Rotherham MBC website at <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/planning-development/planning-guidance-1/2>

⁴ [A guide to the Local Plan – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

22. In accordance with Basic Conditions, the Plan has been developed to be in generally conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Local Plan.
23. A further Basic Condition requires neighbourhood plans to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which the NPPF describes at paragraph 16 as *‘At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’*. Achieving sustainable development is at the heart of this Plan.
24. These Basic Conditions also require a neighbourhood plan to be compatible with relevant legal obligations and human rights requirements, and to comply with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations requirements. It is considered that the Plan is compatible with these and the various other Basic Conditions

The Neighbourhood Plan and What It Seeks to Achieve

25. The Plan sets out the objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the parish up to 2041.
26. It recognises that the parish has changed in recent years and is likely to continue to change. It also recognises that, as a historic parish with a strong sense of identity and a generally high-quality natural and built environment, it is important to maintain and, where possible, enhance the features that make it an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, work and visit.
27. The key issues facing the parish, as highlighted through consultation, include:
 - the need to protect and enhance the natural environment, important community facilities, heritage, and sense of identity; and
 - ensuring that new development is sustainable, of high quality and respects and wherever possible enhances the parish’s character.
28. By preparing a neighbourhood plan, the community can play a stronger role in shaping how the parish develops. Through its policies, the Plan sets out what the community expects from development proposals in the parish, including matters such as design, scale, location, and type of development.
29. The Plan is not intended to replace or duplicate national or local planning policy. Instead, it sits alongside and compliments these policies by adding more detailed, parish-specific guidance where needed. Where existing national or local planning policies already meet the needs of the parish, they are not repeated here. The Plan focuses on a small number of issues that consultation has shown are of particular importance to the parish and where it can have the greatest impact.
30. Planning applications will continue to be determined by Rotherham MBC, and in some cases by other bodies. However, once made, the Plan must be taken into account when decisions affecting the parish are made. This gives local residents a much stronger voice in shaping future development.

2. About Firbeck Parish

31. Firbeck is an attractive historic parish on the eastern edge of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham, on the Nottinghamshire border between Maltby and Oldcotes, about 15 kilometres east of Rotherham town centre.

Firbeck Parish Past

32. Firbeck has a rich history that has helped shape the parish as it is today.
33. The name Firbeck probably derives from the stream in its wooded setting, with 'firth' meaning a wooded area or clearing and 'beck' being a Danelaw term for a stream. The spelling has varied over time. William West, who built the first Firbeck Hall in 1594, referred to 'Firbecke' in a document published in 1598. A map at Worksop College dating from 1600 uses 'Firbeck', while John Speed's map around 10 years later uses 'Furbeck'.
34. No documentary evidence has been found to prove Firbeck existed before 1171, but place names with Norse connections, such as Thwaite, Sandbeck and possibly Firbeck itself, suggest the valley may have been occupied much earlier.
35. Before the Norman Conquest, the area was held by the Saxon earls Harold and Edwin of Conisbrough and Laughton respectively. After the Conquest, three Norman families held the land: the De Buslis, the Mortons and the De Warreners. Roger de Busli held the largest share from nearby Tickhill Castle. In the early development of the parish, however, one of the most significant influences was the building of Roche Abbey in the 12th century.
36. There is some evidence of a short-lived medieval settlement beyond Firbeck Hall. This was uncovered in 2001 during a watching brief by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit while a sewer was being replaced.
37. Firbeck was originally the manorial home of the Cressy family, but in the reign of Elizabeth I or James I it was bought by William West of Moorgate Hall, Rotherham. West was a notable legal practitioner who published the legal work *Symbolaeographia*. It is thought that the first manor house in Firbeck, before the Hall was built, was the property now known as Manor Farm.
38. A branch of the Saunderson family also resided in the area before the purchase of Sandbeck. It was known as Gowk-hill Hall, the Hall of the hill of the cuckoo. When it was sold to Nonus Parker in 1685 he changed its name to Park-Hill. Thus, two estates evolved in Firbeck both with a unique and fascinating history.
39. Firbeck Hall, passed through the hands of the West family to Elizabeth Fane and then Sir Francis Fane. In 1669 it was sold to William and Mary Woolhouse. In 1676, it was sold to Jonathan Staniforth. Jonathan was married four times, his third wife was Mary Disney; they had a son called Disney Staniforth. After Mary's death, Jonathan Staniforth married Christian Knight, one of the daughters of Sir Ralph Knight of Langold.

40. Disney Staniforth married Mary Skinner of London and they had three children, Jonathan, Mary, Henrietta and Amelia. Amelia was the last to inherit the Firbeck estate and kept a journal of their daily life there and a record of the weather. The weather records have been sent to the National Meteorological Archive.
41. Farming was at the heart of the community. In 1730, a much-needed improvement was made to the plough by Joseph Foljambe of Rotherham. It was patented by him, but he later sold the patent to Jonathan Staniforth's son, Disney Staniforth. The improved plough became known as the Rotherham Swing Plough and was a commercial success.
42. The Staniforth family owned the Hall until 1792, when the last remaining unmarried granddaughter of Jonathan, Amelia Staniforth, died. It was inherited by a relative, John Barker.
43. Journals written by Amelia Staniforth from 1782-1785, and another in 1792, give fascinating accounts of life at Firbeck Hall during the late 18th century. We hear about farming methods, visits by Mr Bates for blistering and blood-letting, picnicking and boating on the lake at Roche Abbey, watching the new turnpike being built, hayricks being erected, barley harvested and walks into the 'town' through the town gate at Firbeck Hall. They played card games by candlelight with Col. St Leger; mostly whist, pope, quadril and deudril. Cowslips were collected for wine and a drink called shrub was made from brandy and oranges. Balls and dances and visits to the theatre in Doncaster and the Mayor's Feast at the Mansion House were enjoyed.
44. They had two important lodgers, referred to in the Journal as Mrs W and her daughter, little Miss W. Mrs W was Dorothy Worsley, her husband the Rev. James Worsley, was second son of Thomas Worsley (1686-1750) of Hovingham Hall and younger brother of the Thomas Worsley who was equerry to George II. In 1747, at the age of 25, James was ordained as Priest of Stonegrave, in North Yorkshire. In 1761 he married Dorothy Pennyman, youngest sister of Sir James Pennyman, 6th Baronet of Ormesby Hall, North Yorkshire. The couple lived at the Rectory in Stonegrave and had four children, James born 1764, Ralph born 1765, Richard born 1767 and Dorothy born 1775. Sadly, James Pennyman died of ill-health in Bath and his wife and children became homeless. They were taken in by the Staniforth sisters; the sons were away at school, educated by her brother, but their sister had tutors at Firbeck Hall. Mrs Worsley's sons married into the White family of Wallingwells Hall and eventually the eldest son, James, inherited the Pennyman estate.
45. In 1792, Amelia Staniforth, the last surviving Staniforth, died and the journals came to an end. Gone were the days of dances at Firbeck and Wallingwells, of Miss Dorothy walking out with her brothers, going a-Fishing, a-Shooting, and a-Coursing, of Mrs W reading a sermon and the news on Sundays and Henrietta 'at accounts'. The Hall fell silent once again and Mrs W and her daughter moved out.
46. In 1800, the Hall was purchased by Henry Gally Knight (1752-1808), Henry was the son of Elizabeth Knight and the Rev. John Gally; he changed his surname to Gally Knight for inheritance purposes. He married Selina FitzHerbert of Tissington Hall, Derbyshire. After his death the Firbeck estate passed to his son, another Henry, who went on the Grand Tour and was responsible for providing the stained glass in the East window of Southwell Minster from the Temple Church in Paris. He married Henrietta Eyre. During the ownership of the Gally Knight family, the Hall was enlarged with the addition of Elizabethan style gables and the church was rebuilt. The architect was William Hurst, who was in partnership with John Woodhead. William Hurst was the son of the keeper of the Salutation Inn, Doncaster, another William Hurst, who had been a racing stud groom for Colonel St Leger, of Park Hill,

Firbeck. William Hurst senior was landlord of the Salutation Inn for twenty-five years. The Inn soon developed a reputation as a racing Inn and had stables and a paddock where horses were stabled for the racing season- many St Leger winners were stabled there.

47. After Henry Gally Knight's death in 1846, the Hall was left to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.
48. The Hall was bought by Frances Harriott Miles in 1853, after the death of her husband William. He was a member of the wealthy Miles family of Bristol. Frances was the daughter of Joshua Jebb and Dorothy Gladwin. Many of the Jebb family lived near Firbeck Hall in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. With Frances at Firbeck Hall was her unmarried sister-in-law, Eliza Miles. After Eliza's death, three stained glass windows were erected in Firbeck Church by Frances to the memory of William and Eliza Miles. William is buried in Bristol Cathedral. There is written proof that Eliza and Frances are entombed in a vault in Firbeck Church along with some members of the Gally Knight family, Selina Gally Knight, wife of Henry Gally Knight Senior, who died in 1823, her son also called Henry who died in 1846 and his wife Henrietta. Rather mysteriously the vault has never been located.
49. An account book from 1866 shows that Frances was involved with the running of the church and St Leger estate whilst managing a large estate herself. She installed a Turkish bath and a gas works at Firbeck Hall during her time there. A grave in Firbeck churchyard is that of her German companion Elizabeth Fontheim, who sadly died of pneumonia when she was in her early twenties; soon after Eliza Miles died of the same ailment. Unfortunately, there were no children from the marriage of William and Frances and the estate eventually passed to her nephew the Rev. Henry Gladwin Jebb. The Rev. Jebb made some improvements to the church and estate in memory of Frances Miles. It is thought he may have been responsible for the building of a large conservatory or Palm House at Firbeck Hall. After his death his nephew Captain Sydney Jebb inherited Firbeck Hall. Sydney was the father of Hubert Miles Gladwyn Jebb, who was born in 1900 and became a successful politician and diplomat. He was knighted in 1949 and made a hereditary Peer. He married Cynthia Noble, the great grand-daughter of Isambard Kingdom Brunel.
50. Sadly, Sydney Jebb's marriage to Rose Eleanor Chichester began to fail and she left Firbeck Hall with their three children when Hubert was just four years old. They finally divorced in 1933.
51. In 1909, Firbeck Hall Estate was offered for sale. It was described as extending to 1,440 acres, including an imposing mansion, stone built in the Elizabethan style, seated amongst beautiful pleasure grounds and richly wooded parklands with stabling, lodges and cottages.
52. The sales brochure stated there were about 150 acres of capital woodland containing well grown oak, beech, elm, chestnut, ash, larch, spruce and other trees. Eight farms were included in the sale with houses and buildings, three water mills, a fully licenced inn, village property and stone quarries. The mansion was described as being set in 200 acres of parkland grandly timbered and intersected by lakes and streams. There were three carriage drives each guarded by stone-built entrance lodges. The Firbeck drive was bordered by a well grown avenue of chestnut trees flanked by conifers and yews. Hunting could be enjoyed with the Lord Fitzwilliam's (Wentworth and Grove) Foxhounds. The woods and plantations were capable of holding a large head of game and pheasant shooting was considered to be excellent, the same with Park Hill. Streams were stocked with trout. There were two lakes one described as spacious and one described as large with a boathouse and island. There were sweeping lawns, tennis lawns, terrace walks and rose and flower gardens. In the walled kitchen garden were

heated glasshouses, including early and intermediate vineries, a Peach House, Cucumber or Melon House and ranges of pits etc. There was an ice house, but this is not mentioned in the sale.

53. Sadly, there being no interest, the estate was withdrawn.
54. One of the farms offered for sale in 1909 was at Four Lane Ends, situated opposite the gates to Sandbeck Park. Four Lane Ends was once a public house as well as a working farm. A newspaper report on Saturday 17th March 1861, records the sale of live and dead stock by Mr J Bannister on the instructions of Mr Thomas Bletcher of the Eagle Inn, Four Lane Ends, Firbeck. The name changed and on Saturday 18th June 1870 the local paper reports that about 15 members of the Rotherham Church Choir, with the organist Dr Sewel, enjoyed a pleasant excursion to Firbeck by waggonette. They went for a stroll through the gardens at Firbeck Hall and when they were tired they adjourned to the Spread Eagle Inn where they partook of a substantial repast. The public house appears to have closed mysteriously in October 1874. Some say it was because labourers on the Sandbeck estate were spending too much time drinking!
55. In 1914, the Doncaster Chronicle reported that the Kiveton Park Committee for the relief of the Belgians decided to be responsible for the care and maintenance of fifty refugees. Captain Jebb, having joined his regiment, agreed that his ancestral hall could be used by the Committee as an asylum for distressed Belgians.
56. Later, Mr Albert Orlando Peech, of Steel, Peech and Tozer, Rotherham rented the property for a few years.
57. In 1934, the estate was purchased by Mr Cyril Aubrey Nicholson, a stockbroker from Sheffield, who turned Firbeck Hall into a famous and glamorous Country Club.
58. Robert Cawkwell, a Sheffield architect from the firm of Hadfield and Cawkwell, created a fashionable art deco style for the new Country Club and it was opened by the glamorous actress Florence Desmond, who was married to the famous pilot Tom Campbell Black. The inside was considered a triumph and Architecture Illustrated published pictures of its latest zebra pattern coverings, sweeping plasterwork and streamlined ocean liner-esque fittings. In June 1935, Vogue magazine ran a feature on Firbeck Hall. The kitchen had the capacity to provide over 400 first class dinners. Colonel Walter Elwyn Jones from the Picadilly Hotel was appointed Managing Director of the Club, and the BBC transmitted its weekly Saturday show 'Late Night Dance Music' from Firbeck.
59. John Stanton Fleming Morrison advised on the construction of the new 18-hole golf course. The course had been designed in two loops of nine holes each and there was an 18-hole putting course.
60. Tom Campbell Black supervised the building of a private airfield. Sheffield Aero Club was invited to take out a lease and establish a club in Firbeck. The club was to provide flying training and there was to be a clubhouse for meetings and social events. The airfield was listed in the AA Airfield Landing Grounds' Guide, which was similar to their motoring guides at that time. No night flying was allowed.
61. The outbreak of the second World War in 1939 interrupted an amazing episode in Firbeck Hall's history. The Hall was offered, by Cyril Nicholson, to the Sheffield Royal Infirmary and became an ophthalmic hospital. The 'Glorious' years were over and in 1943 Firbeck Hall was offered for sale again.

62. At the start of World War II, the airfield was taken over by the RAF. In 2011, a cairn was erected on the edge of the airfield by the Airfield Research Group, as a memorial to the personnel who served at RAF Firbeck during World War II and to commemorate the RAF's presence and the specific squadrons based in Firbeck. The airfield, active from 1940 until about 1948, was mainly used for flying training and as a relief landing ground.
63. Another item of interest is that the South Yorkshire Aviation Society moved their aircraft collection to Home Farm, Firbeck in 1981 and it became the South Yorkshire aircraft museum. It was relocated to a former RAF site in Doncaster and reopened to the public in 1999.
64. In 1945 the Hall was purchased by the Miners' Welfare Commission and converted to become the South Yorkshire Miners' Rehabilitation Centre. It was transferred to the NHS Sheffield Regional Hospital Board in 1951. In 1974, it came under Rotherham Area Health Authority, but in 1991 the Rehabilitation Centre closed.
65. Since the first sale of Firbeck Hall and Park Hill there have been various land and farm sales and by 1996 a much smaller estate surrounding the Hall was on offer. The Hall, and the remaining land, was bought by Mr Glen Saint. However, the Hall, gardens and woodlands were neglected and began to deteriorate. Villagers were alerted to the Hall's perilous state in 2009 by village resident Mr Don Scott and The Friends of Firbeck Hall was formed to save the Hall from becoming totally derelict.
66. The estate was purchased by Mr Jason Cooper who restored West Lodge and then it was sold again to Ashley Wildsmith who was granted a conditional planning approval.
67. In 2019, Firbeck Hall was sold again and purchased by One Construction and Building Group Ltd who have taken the building and grounds to new heights, sympathetically returning the Hall to its former magnificence. The fabric of the building was restored and eight new houses have been built under the Government's enabling development scheme.
68. As mentioned earlier there was another large estate in Firbeck, Park Hill, taking its name from Nonus Parker who bought it from Thomas Chadwick. When Mr Parker died in 1734, he left the estate to his surviving daughter, Mrs William Singleton of Dublin.
69. In 1745, Mr and Mrs Singleton sold the estate to Major Thomas General Fowke who became the Governor of Gibraltar. In 1754, on taking up his post in Gibraltar, Thomas Fowke sold the estate to the trustees of Thomas Thornhill of Fixby.
70. We know little of Thomas Thornhill's residency at Park Hill and it would be fair to assume that he did not actually live there. Thomas was educated at St Catherine's College Cambridge and later travelled on a European Tour. He succeeded to his uncle's estates at Fixby, Yorkshire in 1779 and married Eleanor Lynne.
71. The estate remained in the possession of Thomas Thornhill until 1765 when it was sold to Anthony St Leger, the youngest son of Sir John St Leger, nephew to the first Lord Doneraile. In 1761, Anthony married Elizabeth Wombwell and purchased the manor and estate of Laughton from the Eyre family, increasing his estate to five hundred acres.

72. Anthony became interested in agricultural research aiming to improve farming methods in the area. He was involved in horse racing and had a private racecourse laid out in a field adjoining his Firbeck estate. The oval shape can still be seen on maps today. He was the founder of the famous classic horse race the St Leger, which is still run in Doncaster along with the Park Hill Stakes. He was also interested in the theatre; it was through his influence that the New Theatre was opened in Doncaster. Amelia Staniforth of Firbeck Hall mentions in her journal (1782- 1785) visits to the theatre and the plays, masques and musical interludes she and her sister saw when they visited Doncaster.
73. When Anthony died, the Park Hill estate passed to his nephew John Hayes St Leger. John was a flamboyant figure who spent some time at the Court of Louis XVI. When he returned to England in 1778, he joined the army and became Captain of the 55th Foot; his portrait was painted in uniform by Sir Joshua Reynolds. He became a close friend of the Prince of Wales who chose him to be Groom of the bedchamber. To mark the occasion, the Prince commissioned Thomas Gainsborough to paint two companion portraits, one of himself and the other of John Hayes St Leger. The portrait of the Prince was given to Anthony St Leger and it hung at Park Hill alongside the one of John by Sir Joshua Reynolds. These two portraits now hang at Waddesdon Manor, and the one of John by Gainsborough is in the Royal Collection.
74. John Hayes St Leger was known as 'handsome Jack' and it was no surprise when he set up a relationship with the beautiful Duchess of Rutland and she became his mistress. An episode is recorded in Amelia Staniforth's Journal that on Saturday October 4th, 1783, "the Duchess of Rutland etc went by from Parkhill".
75. After John's death in 1800, the estate passed to his brother, Anthony Butler St Leger who married Harriet Chester. In 1861, their only son Anthony Francis Butler St Leger inherited but he died unmarried and there was no direct heir. The estate passed to Harriet's nephew, John Chester who assumed the surname and arms of St Leger. In 1905, his son Arthur John Bonfoy St Leger inherited the estate. It was offered for sale in 1909.
76. The estate was purchased by Cyril Aubrey Nicholson in 1934 along with the Firbeck Hall estate.
77. Park Hill was often let out when the St Legers were not in residence. In 1791, Michael Angelo Taylor and his wife Frances Anne were living there. Michael Angelo Taylor was a Member of Parliament and Whig politician in the 1830s. His house in Whitehall became a favourite rendezvous of that party. Whilst an MP he drew attention to the defective paving and lighting of the streets of London. An Act was carried dealing with such matters and it is still known as Michael Angelo Taylor's Act. Often called "Chicken Taylor" because of his reference to himself as a "*mere chicken in the law*", he is described by Sir Spencer Walpole as "a pompous barrister, with a little body and a loud voice." His wife gained notoriety as the alleged mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales.
78. Another couple who rented Park Hill were Holland and Harriet Watson, whose son Hewett Cottrell Watson was born in Firbeck. Hewett became a famous phrenologist, botanist and evolutionary theorist. His birth is commemorated by a blue plaque on the outside wall of Firbeck Village Hall.
79. In 1812, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cousin Samuel Barrett and his wife Margaret rented Park Hill and in 1813 their son Samuel Goodin Barrett was baptised in Firbeck Church. Samuel Goodin Barrett and Elizabeth Barrett Browning both descended from the marriage between Edward Barrett (1734-1798) and Judith Goodin (1741-1804), they were their common great grandparents.

80. There were other families who rented Park Hill before it was sold in 1934. For a few years, starting in 1901, it became 'Miss White's School for Ladies'. It is thought that the school was transferred from nearby Maltby Hall.
81. The 1901 census return confirms a school did exist. Mary White aged 40 in 1901 was the principal of the school. A lady listed as Ellen White aged 70 can be safely assumed was Mary White's mother. The matron was Anna Lundtan aged 26 from Norway. The art mistress was Sophia Amsturter, aged 32 from India. There were three other Governesses/teachers; Lea Vemdeville from Austria, Nellie Morrison from Scotland and Madeleine Landgent from Brighton. There were eight domestic servants, one of whom was from Ireland and another from Denmark. The cook was Ellen Butler aged 40. The youngest domestic servant was the house boy. Charles Foxes aged 13 from Rotherham.
82. Park Hill house was demolished in 1935, but there are still remnants of the walled garden, a carriage drive, lake, cascade, folly and ice house.

Firbeck Parish Today

83. Extending to about 520 hectares, it is mainly rural in nature. At 0.6 persons per hectare, its population density is well below the Rotherham borough (9.0) and national (3.7) average. Farming has, and continues, to play an important role in the development of the parish and remains the main land use.
84. At the time of the 2021 Census, the parish was home to around 313 residents living in 136 households. Analysis of the Census indicates that between 2011 and 2021, the population of the parish increased by around 5% (14 people).
85. Reflecting the national trend it has an ageing population. At 32%⁵ the proportion of its population aged over 64 is well above the England (18%) and Rotherham borough (20%) averages.
86. Home ownership levels are relatively high, with around 73% of households owning their homes outright or with a mortgage or loan. This compares to 63% for England and 64% for Rotherham borough. At 46% the number of homes with 4 or more bedrooms was more than double the England (21%) and Rotherham borough (16%) average. Average house prices (both to rent and buy) are amongst the most expensive in the borough⁶.
87. The evidence suggests deprivation is relatively not a significant issue.
88. The main settlement is Firbeck village, in which most of its population, limited services and amenities can be found. Most people must travel, predominantly by car, outside the parish to meet their retail, employment and other needs.
89. It is a popular place to live and visit with a strong sense of identity, pride and community spirit. This is reflected in the number of visitors to it and the wide and diverse range of local activities and social

⁵ All figures in this section are derived from the 2021 Census unless otherwise indicated

⁶ Source: Zoopla – see [Zoopla > Search Property to Buy, Rent, House Prices, Estate Agents](#)
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interaction that take place. These activities are focused on the three main community buildings in the Parish; St Martin's Church, Firbeck Village Hall and to a lesser extent The Black Lion Public House. Firbeck village was awarded Gold in the RHS Britain in Bloom Competition as well as winner of the small village category for Yorkshire in the 2024 competition.

90. It is characterised by a distinct and attractive built environment. According to Historic England in 2025, 20 buildings have been granted 'Listed Building' status in view of their national architectural and historic interest. All these Listed Buildings are designated at Grade II.
91. It is rural in character with a strong connection to its surrounding landscape. This is reflected in that the whole of the parish, including the main settlement of Firbeck, is designated as Green Belt in the Local Plan. The main purpose of Green Belt is to keep the land within it permanently open. Within the Green Belt, development is severely constrained and only allowed in very special circumstances.
92. The area is strategically well located in relation to the national road network, off the A634 and with relatively convenient access to the M18, M1 and A1 (M) motorways. It is also well served by footpaths and, to a lesser extent, by bridleways. There is a limited local bus service.
93. There are high levels of car usage and ownership. This is reflected in the higher than average (95%) households in the parish with access to a car or van, compared to 77% for Rotherham borough and 76% nationally.
94. A more detailed statistical profile of the parish derived from the 2021 Census is available on the Parish Council website at [Home- Firbeck Parish Council](#).

3. Objectives of the Plan

95. The Plan seeks to address the development challenges and opportunities facing the parish. It focuses on the issues where the evidence shows the greatest need for action and where the Plan can have the greatest impact.
96. At the heart of the Plan is a set of objectives derived from community consultation. These are, to:
 1. Promote development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable;
 2. Conserve and protect the history, character and identity of the built environment, including locally listed buildings, and enhance their settings;
 3. Safeguard and manage features that contribute to the visual appearance and rural character of the parish;
 4. Enhance residents' health, wellbeing and sense of community, and improve recreational and community facilities;
 5. Give the parish a stronger voice in shaping the type and appearance of development that affects it.
97. These objectives will be delivered through a small number of planning policies and a community action.

4. An Introduction to the Plan's Policies

98. This chapter sets out the detailed policies that will help deliver the Plan's objectives.
99. In line with the requirements for neighbourhood plans, these policies focus on the use and development of land and buildings – in other words planning matters. However, this does not mean it cannot include other non-planning related policies that the community would like to achieve. It is important that the Plan makes a clear distinction between planning and non-planning policies. This Plan achieves this by referencing the former as a 'Policy' and the latter as a 'Community Action.'
100. The policies have been grouped by key theme for clarity and ease of reading. Each theme has its own section and is supported by a small number of policies, together with explanatory text that sets out why the policies are needed and how they should be applied.
101. While every effort has been made to make this, and other parts of the Plan, easy to understand, the wording of the actual policies is necessarily more formal so that it complies with statutory requirements.
102. When using the Plan to assess a development proposal or planning issue, all relevant policies in the Plan should be considered alongside local and national planning policy.

4.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Built Environment

103. The parish has a rich, distinctive and generally attractive built environment, with many fine and historic buildings and structures set within a highly valued landscape. Recognised for its rarity, tranquillity and scenic quality, this environment makes a significant contribution to the parish's identity and sense of place.
104. This built environment has been shaped by the parish's long and distinctive history. It includes a range of architectural styles that reflect its development over many centuries. Buildings and structures of national and local importance date from different periods, creating a rich variety of forms and materials. Many are concentrated in and around the historic core of Firbeck village, as well as around former farmsteads and historic estates. The parish also contains the site of a former Second World War airfield and a historic racecourse, with some evidence suggesting that the first St Leger race was run here in the 18th century.
105. The community is rightly proud of the parish's history and heritage and places a high priority on ensuring that future development respects and, where possible, enhances these qualities.

Nationally Important Buildings and Structures

106. For the planning purposes all buildings of recognised heritage value may be divided into designated and non-designated assets. In broad terms a designated asset is one which has been identified as nationally important and non-designated one locally important.

107. The National Heritage List of England⁷ contains 20 entries (some comprising multiple buildings) for the parish. These are all Listed Buildings⁸ (all Grade II), which represents a relatively high proportion of its building stock.
108. The full list as recorded by Historic England in 2025³ is set out below. It includes a range of building types and architectural styles, including houses, farm buildings and buildings associated with historic estates.

Figure 1: Listed Buildings in Firbeck Parish in 2025 (all Grade II)⁹

1. 3, Lime Avenue
2. 15, 17 and 19 New Road
3. 23, 25 and 27 New Road
4. 64 New Road
5. Bridge and Weir approximately 140 metres to east of Firbeck Hospital, New Road
6. Farm building at Park Hill Farm immediately to west of Farmhouse Park Hill Drive
7. External cellar built into the bank approximately 20 metres to south of Stone Mill, Stone
8. Haven Farmhouse, Lamb Lane
9. Church of St Martin, New Road
10. 79 New Road
11. West Lodge (to Firbeck Hospital), New Road
12. Ice House approximately 230 metres to south-west of Park Hill Farmhouse, Park Hill Wood
13. Ice House off Salt Hill Bridle Path, Lamb Lane
14. Cartshed and Granary immediately to north-east of Home Farmhouse, New Road
15. Stable block at Firbeck Hospital, New Road
16. Yew Tree House, New Road
17. Manor Farmhouse, New Road
18. Firbeck Hospital, New Road
19. Home Farmhouse and range of farm buildings enclosing foldyard to south including attached walls and freestanding wall with pig troughs, New Road
20. Knight Family Memorial approximately 2 metres to south-west of porch of Church of St Martin, New Road

109. In general, these listed buildings are in good condition. None is included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (2025)¹⁰ or identified as being at risk on Rotherham MBC's Heritage at Risk Register¹¹
110. The designation of these buildings and structures as Listed Buildings gives them special legal protection and recognition beyond that which can be provided through a neighbourhood plan. It is important, however, that the Plan highlights the unique contribution they make to the distinct character and identity of the parish and the need to conserve and enhance this.

⁷ [Search the List – Find listed buildings, monuments, battlefields and more | Historic England](#)

⁸ [What Are Listed Buildings? | Historic England](#)

⁹ Source: [HeritageGateway - Home *](#)

¹⁰ [Search the Heritage at Risk Register | Historic England](#)

¹¹ [Built Heritage and Archaeology – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

Locally Important Buildings and Structures

111. National and local planning policies recognise that some buildings, monuments, sites and other heritage assets have significance that should be taken into account in planning decisions even though they are not formally designated. These are commonly known as non-designated heritage assets.
112. The introduction to Chapter 20 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' of the NPPF states, '*Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance....*'.
113. National Management Development Policy HE7 in the NPPF specifically deals with 'Decisions on non-designated heritage assets' and includes detailed guidance in deciding planning applications affecting them. This includes that in assessing development proposals that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage sites, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage assets.
114. National planning guidance enables neighbourhood plans and others to identify non-designated heritage assets where this is supported by sound evidence. Identifying an asset in this way does not in itself alter the planning controls that apply to its alteration or demolition. However, where planning permission is required, its identification as a non-designated heritage asset becomes a material consideration, meaning that its local heritage significance must be taken into account when decisions are made on development proposals.
115. Six assets in the parish have been formally identified as non-designated heritage assets through the South Yorkshire Local Heritage List¹² managed by the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, which '*identifies locally significant heritage assets that contribute to the region's history and distinctiveness, offering recognition and consideration in planning decisions*'. These are:
 - 31, 33, 35 and 37 New Road, Firbeck
 - Park Hill Lodge, New Road, Firbeck
 - Black Lion Public House, New Road, Firbeck
116. Through the preparation of the Plan, including specialist input from officers at Rotherham MBC and 'local historians', several other buildings and structures have also been identified as making an important contribution to the distinctive character of the parish.
117. The Plan seeks to support the conservation and appreciation of these assets by identifying them as Firbeck Parish Character Buildings and Structures of Local Heritage Interest. This approach is supported by national and local planning policy. For example, paragraph 5.6.88 of the Core Strategy refers to the significant number of historic buildings that contribute to the borough's distinctive local character but do not have specific protection through the planning system. Core Strategy Policy CS23, Valuing the Historic Environment, also seeks to protect the heritage significance and setting of locally identified heritage assets.

¹² [Home - South Yorkshire Local Heritage List](#)

118. It should be noted that non-designated heritage assets identified through a neighbourhood plan carry the same weight in the planning system as those identified through other mechanisms, including the South Yorkshire Local Heritage List referred to above.

POLICY FNP1: FIRBECK PARISH CHARACTER BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF LOCAL HERITAGE INTEREST

The Plan identifies the buildings and structures listed below as Firbeck Parish Character Buildings and Structures of Local Heritage Interest:

1. Thwaite House Bridge (including adjoining sheep wash), Penny Hill, Firbeck
2. Former RAF Firbeck Airfield, North of New Road, Firbeck
3. Ha ha Adjacent New Road, Firbeck
4. Blast huts – former RAF Firbeck airfield, Flat Lane, Firbeck
5. Monument to former RAF Firbeck Airfield, Flat Lane, Firbeck
6. Park Hill Farm, Park Hill Drive, Firbeck
7. Wall between Black Lion Public House and St Martin's Church, New Road, Firbeck
8. Red Phone Box, at the Junction of Kidd Lane and New Road, Firbeck
9. Finger Post Sign, at the Junction of Kidd Lane and New Road, Firbeck
10. Village Sign, at the Junction of Kidd Lane and New Road, Firbeck
11. Bridge, Salt Hill, Firbeck
12. Cobbled Path, New Road at the junction with Lime Avenue, Firbeck
13. Lion Cottage (including stone statue of a lion standing on top of the gable end chimney stack), New Road, Firbeck
14. The Beeches, New Road, Firbeck
15. Orchard Cottage, Firbeck Hall, New Road, Firbeck
16. Stone House (known as Ivy Cottages), Flat Lane, Stone
17. Limestone Overhang, near Seed Hill Wood, Stone
18. Stone Farm, Kingswood Lane, Firbeck
19. Salt Hill Lodge, Lamb Lane, Firbeck
20. Former St. Leger Track, adjacent to Salt Hill Road (track)

The management of development affecting Firbeck Parish Character Buildings and Structures of Local Heritage Interest will be consistent with local and national planning policy for development affecting non-designated heritage assets.

119. The supporting evidence document 'Firbeck Parish Character Buildings and Structures of Local Heritage Interest' provides more information about the individual identified buildings and structures, including location plan and justification for their designation. This can be found on the Parish Council website at <http://www.firbeckparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Ensuring High Quality, Distinctive and Sustainable Design

120. The Local Plan establishes the requirements for high-quality, distinctive and sustainable design in new development. It includes several policies and supporting documents that help secure this. These include Core Strategy Policy CS28 (Sustainable Design), with its emphasis on '*Proposals for development should respect and enhance the distinctive features of Rotherham. They should develop a strong sense of place with a high quality of public realm and well-designed buildings within a clear*

framework of routes and spaces. Development proposals should be responsive to their context and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping'. It also includes Sites and Policies Policy SP55 (Design Principles), which states, 'All forms of development are required to be of high quality, incorporate inclusive design principles, create decent living and working environments, and positively contribute to the local character and distinctiveness of an area and the way it functions'.

121. The position in the Local Plan about the need for high-quality, distinctive and sustainable design is consistent with and supported by national planning policy, with its emphasis on that one of main objectives of the planning system is to create high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places, as reflected and articulated in Chapter 14 'Achieving well-design places' in the NPPF.
122. Consultation has shown that securing high-quality and distinctive design is of particular importance to the parish. Firbeck has a rich and generally attractive built environment that gives it a strong sense of place, identity and local pride. The quality and significance of this environment are highly valued by the community and are also recognised by local studies, Rotherham MBC's heritage officer, local heritage groups and others.
123. The parish owes much of its distinctive character and strong sense of identity to its wide range of buildings and structures, many of them historic, which, with only a few exceptions, sit well together. These are complemented by trees, gardens and the surrounding countryside, which enhance their setting.
124. The community strongly believes that the Plan should help ensure that new development, whether large or small, respects and, where possible, enhances the local character and context as well as its strong distinctive sense of place and rural identity. This relates not only to the appearance of buildings, but also to matters such as layout, mix of uses, landscaping, and parking. Development should also be sustainable and respond appropriately to climate change.
125. This does not mean that all development should replicate what already exists, nor does it require uniformity in design. However, where proposals depart from the established character of the local area, applicants will be expected to demonstrate clearly how the design is informed by and contributes positively to the quality of the area and reflect and reinforce local distinctiveness.
126. It is considered that the Plan can make an important contribution here. This includes by identifying the special qualities of the local area and explaining how this should be reflected in development. These local special qualities, include:

Architectural Style

127. Pre 20th century architectural style is uniform with buildings constructed of limestone topped with a mixture of red pantile and stone slate roofs. There are also examples of clay pantile roofs with the bottom three courses in clay slate.
128. Building height is also generally uniform with most buildings being two storeys. Roof shape varies with examples of both hipped and simple ridge types. Chimney stacks are often constructed of stone in older properties though there are some examples built of brick.

129. The majority window types are various forms of casement though there are some notable exceptions such as the horizontal sliding sashes and mullion windows in a few properties. Inappropriate window replacement in the older properties is rare.
130. Flat roofs are uncommon.
131. Architecturally, post 20th Century properties are more mixed, with dormer bungalows constructed of artificial stone and tiled roofs around Kingswood Close and brick built detached two storey houses dominating around St Martins Close.

Settlement Pattern

132. The main built-up area developed along New Road and around St Martin's Church, with narrow lanes, stone walls, and mature trees contributing to its character.
133. The historic core of the parish along New Road and St Martin's Church contains a significant concentration of listed and locally valued buildings that individually and collectively help to define its rural historic quality and sense of identity.
134. Though some newer developments, especially at the eastern, western and southern edges of the Firbeck village, have extended the settlement pattern, but the village and wider parish have not changed much from the 18th century. While there has been some 'infilling' of gardens and other spaces in the village, this has not been to the extent of similar villages. The existing pattern of development (and roads) is of historic origin.

Boundaries

135. Boundaries of buildings are traditionally defined by limestone walls topped with a variety of different coping stones. Gate piers, where they survive, are generally of a simple design. These are supplemented in many areas by neatly trimmed hedges. Open plan frontage is rare, as are border treatments such as Leylandii and panel fencing.
136. Generally, there is a positive general absence of modern brick and pre-cast concrete walling.

Formal Open Spaces

137. Apart from the grassed areas opposite Firbeck Church, there are no significant formal public open spaces. However, this is more than compensated for by the parish's rural setting and the ready access this provides to the countryside as well as the high standard of many of the private gardens, many of which are visible from public areas.

Gardens and Building Line

138. Buildings are mainly set back from the road with gardens (front and back) or more extensive landscaped grounds often containing mature trees. As mentioned above, many of the private gardens are of a high standard.

Extensions to Existing Buildings

139. There are numerous examples of extension and alteration to existing properties, much of it done in recent years. Overall, these fit nicely into the local context in terms of scale, massing, architectural styles and details etc.

New Housing Development

140. Generally new housing developments (including barn and other conversions) have been relatively small, usually consisting of a single dwelling, clusters of dwellings or the conversion of farm buildings and historic estates such as Firbeck Hall. Modern clusters of dwellings are often laid out more uniformly than the older parts of the parish. The more modern developments are generally well and sympathetically designed.

Car Parking

141. The car parking typologies found in the parish are a mix of on-street, off-street, and to a lesser extent, on-plot garage parking. Generally, they are well integrated into the design so as not to dominate the development and the street scene.

Other

142. The surrounding countryside and woodland edges are fundamental to the Firbeck village's setting, character and visual tranquillity.

POLICY FNP2: ENSURING GOOD QUALITY, DISTINCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Development proposals should be of high quality, sustainable design, which recognises and reinforces character and local distinctiveness of the area, in which it is situated, and more generally, the special character of the Firbeck Parish. This includes:

- a) Should retain existing natural and historic features that contribute to visual, historical or architectural character;
- b) Should retain and where possible incorporate traditional building styles, materials and details including local magnesium limestone for walls, stone or brick chimney stacks, and red pantile, clay pantile or stone slate roofs where feasible and appropriate;
- c) Be no more than two storeys high;
- d) Existing building lines should be respected;
- e) Flat roofs should be avoided;
- f) Buildings should be set back from the road (0–2 metres);
- g) Any new or infill building should match nearby roof shapes, heights, and plot sizes.
- h) Low stone walls or native hedges should mark property edges;
- i) New buildings should be orientated so that the principal elevation faces the road/street;
- j) Hedgerows and mature trees, especially native species be retained and where possible enhanced;
- k) Every opportunity, where practicable, viable and visually acceptable, to incorporate features that improve environmental performance and the reduction of carbon emissions, including energy efficiency measures and green energy generation should be taken;
- l) Be guided by and respond positively to the design principles set out in the Rotherham Local Plan, including the Development in the Green Belt and Householder Design Guidance SPDs;
- m) In addition, where they are located on the edge of Firbeck Village special care should be taken to soften the boundary between built form and the wider landscape such as by reducing the scale of development and encouraging soft landscape planting such as hedgerows, wildflowers, and tree planting.

Where applicants propose standardised or 'off-the-shelf' designs, these should, where necessary, be adapted to respond positively to local character and distinctiveness.

Development that fails to take available opportunities to enhance local character and distinctiveness will not be supported.

Dark Skies

143. Darkness at night is one of the defining characteristics of the parish and of rural areas more generally. It is also a feature that national and local planning policies seek to protect and enhance.
144. The CPRE night blight map¹³ shows that the parish has relatively dark skies. It indicates that the whole parish is an area of intrinsically dark skies that remains relatively unaffected by light pollution.
145. Light pollution affects the character of the countryside and obscures views of the night sky. It can also have harmful effects on wildlife, including bats, insects, nocturnal mammals and birds, many of which are present in the parish. Artificial lighting can disrupt feeding, breeding and movement patterns. There is also growing concern that excessive exposure to artificial light can affect human health by disrupting natural body rhythms.
146. According to the International Dark-Sky Association, glare from artificial lights can have the following impacts¹⁴:
 - Wetland habitats – disruption of the nocturnal activity of amphibians whose night-time croaking is part of the breeding ritual, interfering with reproduction and reducing populations.
 - Migratory birds – disruption of migration patterns of birds that depend on cues from properly timed seasonal schedules, causing them to migrate too early or too late and miss ideal climate conditions for nesting and foraging etc.
 - Nocturnal species – detrimental effects are most clearly seen in bats. Light falling on a bat roost exit point will at least delay bats from emerging, which shortens the amount of time available for foraging. In addition to causing disturbance to bats at roost, artificial lighting can also affect the feeding behaviour of bats and their use of commuting routes.
147. There is growing concern about the adverse effects of light pollution on the parish's night skies. Given the importance of dark skies to local character and the sensitivity of some habitats and species found in the parish, development should help to protect and, where possible, enhance this valued feature.
148. Policy FNP3 requires applicants to demonstrate that any proposed external lighting associated with new development is necessary and designed in accordance with recognised good practice. Particular regard should be had to the Institution of Lighting Professionals' guidance on reducing obtrusive light¹⁵. Where possible, lighting should also be energy efficient.

¹³ [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies Map](#)

¹⁴ [What is light pollution? | DarkSky International](#)

149. Well-designed external lighting does not result in poorly lit spaces. Rather, it ensures that light is directed only where needed and that light spill is minimised.

POLICY FNP3: CONSERVING DARK SKIES

The darkness of the night sky above Firbeck Parish will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced. All development proposals should minimise light spill through good design and appropriate lighting management.

4.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (including the Green Belt)

150. The parish benefits from an attractive rural setting that is central to its character and identity.
151. Rotherham MBC's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study¹⁵ identifies 16 distinct local character areas across the borough. For each area, it provides a description and identifies key characteristics. Firbeck Parish lies within the '9a Sandbeck Parklands' core local landscape character area. Its defining features include extensive woodland blocks within high-quality agricultural land and narrow stream valleys such as Firbeck Dike. This landscape is considered highly sensitive to change arising from development and is protected from inappropriate development by Green Belt policy and Core Strategy Policy CS21 (Landscape).
152. The local landscape is highly valued and recognised for its rarity, tranquillity and scenic quality. It contains many important green infrastructure assets, including trees, woodlands, hedgerows and wildlife sites. For many residents and visitors, this is what makes the parish special and one of its greatest strengths. Its protection and enhancement are, therefore, a major priorities for the community, as reflected in the consultation findings.
153. The policies in this section are based on the strong community view that development should protect and, where possible, enhance the parish's rural character and setting, and resist inappropriate development that would harm these qualities.
154. The importance of this rural environment, and the need to protect it from inappropriate development, is recognised in national and local planning policy. This includes policies relating to landscape, green infrastructure, important green spaces, biodiversity, geodiversity, trees and hedgerows.

Protecting the Green Belt

155. Special mention should be made of the Green Belt, which covers the whole of the parish. Its extent is shown on the policies map accompanying the Rotherham Local Plan.

¹⁵ [Evidence Base Downloads – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

156. The context for Green Belt policy is set out in the NPPF and in Policy CS4 of the Local Plan.
157. The aims and purposes of Green Belt policy are clearly set out in the NPPF. As the introduction to Chapter 13 'Green Belt' of the NPPF states, *'The objective of Green Belt policy, as set out in this chapter, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence'*.
158. Consultation shows strong community support for the continued role and function of the Green Belt in the parish. It is highly valued, particularly for the way it has helped protect the parish's distinctive character and setting, direct development to more sustainable locations, and provide opportunities for recreation close to where people live. It also contains many important assets, including wildlife habitats and heritage features. The community has made clear that retaining the Green Belt in the parish is a top priority.

POLICY FNP4: GREEN BELT

The Plan supports the continued designation of the parish as Green Belt. Within the Green Belt, there will be a strong presumption against development that would conflict with its purposes or adversely affect its open character, in accordance with national and local planning policy. Proposals to amend the existing Green Belt boundary within the parish will not be supported.

Local Green Spaces

159. National planning policy enables neighbourhood plans to identify and protect green areas of particular importance by designating land as Local Green Space. Where land is designated as Local Green Space, it is protected from development other than in very special circumstances. To qualify for designation, land must meet the criteria set out in the NPPF, including being reasonably close to the community it serves, holding particular local significance—for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife—and not being an extensive tract of land. National planning policy also advises that where land is already protected by Green Belt designation then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.
160. After careful consideration, one green space has been identified as being of particular importance and as meeting the criteria for designation. This is set out below. Several other green spaces were also considered but have not been included. These lie within the Green Belt and therefore already benefit from a significant degree of protection, and they did not meet the strict criteria for designation set out in the NPPF.
161. The supporting evidence document Firbeck Parish Local Green Spaces provides more information about the sites, including location plan and justification for its designation. This can be found on the Parish Council website at <http://www.firbeckparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

POLICY FNP5: LOCAL GREEN SPACE

The site listed below, and identified on the accompanying plan, is designated as a Local Green Space. The management of development within this Local Green Space will be consistent with national planning policy for development within the Green Belt.

1. Green space at the junction of Kidd Lane and New Road, Firbeck

Nature Conservation

162. The parish is largely rural in character. Its landscape contains a rich variety of natural features and assets, including trees, woodlands, hedgerows, rivers, ponds, orchards, roadside verges and other green spaces. These contribute to local character, provide habitats for biodiversity, and create spaces for local people to enjoy and explore.
163. This richness is reflected in the abundance of plants and wildlife found in the parish, some of which are particularly important because of their national or local rarity. This includes protected species and priority habitats identified in the Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan (RBAP)^[5] and associated action plans. The parish is also home to significant areas of Priority Habitat^[6], particularly deciduous woodland (including some ancient woodland) and good-quality semi-improved grassland.
164. The biodiversity importance of the parish has been recognised national and locally. The eastern edge of the parish forms part of the Dyscarr Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest¹⁶. Three sites have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites in the Rotherham Local Plan- Firbeck Hall Woodlands, St Martin's Church, and Seed Hill Wood. A further one, Lodge Plantation & Rough Wood Local Wildlife site lies close to its parish. In addition, Seed Hill Wood has also been identified as an important place for geology as reflected in its designation in 2025 as a Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS).
165. In addition to the sites identified in the paragraph above, several other sites have been identified through the Plan process that it is considered may have the same level or similar biodiversity value as designated sites. Further work is required to establish the full extent of their biodiversity value with a view to putting them forward for designation as Local Wildlife Sites. The Parish Council will liaise with the community, Rotherham MBC and others to undertake the necessary survey work, if and when resources become available
166. The consultation findings show that the natural environment and the diverse wildlife of the parish are highly valued by the community. Residents wish to see them protected and, where possible, enhanced. This is especially important in the context of biodiversity loss nationally and locally, caused by a range of factors including development pressure, climate change and changes in agricultural practices.

¹⁶ A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a formal conservation designation in the United Kingdom that identifies areas of particular interest due to their rare species of flora and fauna, as well as important geological or physiological features.
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167. All new development, whether large or small, is encouraged to consider how it can contribute to this objective. Examples include protecting and planting native trees, conserving and enhancing watercourses and ponds and incorporating features such as bird and bat boxes or bricks.
168. An approach that is supported by local and national planning policies. Good examples are policies CS 20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity, SP 33: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, SP 34: Site Protected for Nature Conservation and SP 35: Protected and Priority species in the Local Plan. It is also consistent with the emerging South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy¹⁷, with its emphasis on '*will identify areas that will either create or improve habitat that will have the greatest benefit to the environment*'. The Plan fully supports these, and other policies and measures aimed at conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
169. The 2021 Environment Act introduced a mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain in the planning system. This includes a requirement that qualifying new developments must achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. An approach that is strongly supported by the Plan.
170. It is a strong preference of the Plan that any Biodiversity Net Gain requirement should be provided on-site or as close to the original site as possible. It is recognised, however, that this not always possible and in such circumstances national and local planning policy for other forms of mitigation.
171. It should also be noted that Biodiversity Net Gain is for habitats only. It does not specifically include specific safeguards for protected species such as bat, reptiles, otters etc, many of which are present in the parish and the Plan seeks to encourage.
172. Furthermore, the community itself intends to take action to improve the biodiversity of the parish. There have been several good examples of how biodiversity within the parish has been improved through community action. These include the Yorkshire Living Churchyard project that involved planting and minor changes to the management of St Martin's Church to encourage an even greater level of wildlife. Further such action is planned locally.

POLICY FNP6: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

Development will be supported and encouraged where it delivers a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with national and local planning policy and requirements.

Where biodiversity measures are required under Biodiversity Net Gain, these should be delivered on site unless it is clearly demonstrated to Rotherham MBC that this is not feasible. In such cases, provision should be made as close to the original site as possible.

Development, including non-residential development, is encouraged to incorporate measures that protect and enhance biodiversity, such as bat, swallow and swift boxes, hedgehog access points, insect bricks, and the planting of native trees and hedgerows.

¹⁷ [Greener Future - South Yorkshire MCA](#)

Development that enhances the biodiversity of important green spaces, or restores or improves native trees and hedgerows, will be supported and encouraged.

COMMUNITY ACTION FNPC1: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY- Firbeck Parish Council will work with community groups, Rotherham MBC, landowners, funders and other organisations to enhance the biodiversity of the Parish including by the creation of wildflower areas, tree planting and the installation of bat and bird boxes on suitable sites.

Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

173. The parish is home to a significant number of trees and hedgerows. These include woodlands, some of them ancient¹⁸, as well as tree groups and individual specimens found across the parish. Many mature trees, including some in prominent locations, contribute to both the countryside and the gardens of private properties.
174. It is nationally and locally recognised that trees, woodlands and hedgerows are important not only for their environmental and wildlife value, including the nesting and foraging opportunities they provide.
175. They also form an essential part of the character and landscape of the parish and provide vital wildlife habitats.
176. Consultation shows that the community (and the wildlife they support) wishes to see them protected and enhanced. This is of particular local importance as there is evidence that some have been lost in recent years in particular through development and changes in agricultural practices.
177. Many trees in the parish already benefit from protection. Several are covered by Tree Preservation Orders ('TPOs')¹⁹.
178. Established countryside hedgerows that meet specified criteria are also protected, and there are many such hedgerows within the parish. Government guidance on protected hedgerows is available at [Countryside hedgerow protection: removing hedgerows- GOV.UK](#).
179. Ancient woodlands are also protected through the planning system, and development affecting them should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons. There are four designated ancient woodlands in the parish: Stubbings Wood, Rough Wood, Frogatts Holt and Stone Wood. Their precise locations can be found at [Ancient Woodland \(England\) | Natural England Open Data Geoportal](#).
180. The Plan seeks to protect important woodlands, trees and hedgerows and supports their active management.

¹⁸ [Ancient Woodland - British Habitats - Woodland Trust](#)

¹⁹ [Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas - GOV.UK](#)

181. One of the main ways a community can help protect important trees and woodlands is by seeking TPOs. However, a neighbourhood plan cannot make a TPO; this can only be done by Rotherham MBC. The Plan can, however, highlight the importance of additional TPOs where justified. The Parish Council will work with Rotherham MBC and other stakeholders to progress this where appropriate.
182. Core Strategy Policy CS20 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance Rotherham's natural environment, including woodlands and important trees with demonstrable biodiversity value. Sites and Policies Policy SP55 (Design Principles) requires development proposals to make appropriate use of natural features such as trees, while Policy SP33 resists development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable sites, habitats and features.
183. Additional tree planting may also be considered to link up fragmented areas of habitats and create green corridors that allow for better movement of wildlife through the landscape. This is something the Plan supports.
184. The planting of native tree and hedgerow species is especially encouraged. These are more characteristic of the parish, better suited to local climate and soil conditions, and more beneficial for wildflowers and wildlife.
185. It is important that the planting of trees and hedgerows should have regard to the relevant planting and management guidance produced by Rotherham MBC, in particular the Trees SPD, which can be found at [planning guidance – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#).
186. The Plan does not include a separate policy on woodlands, trees and hedgerows because this would duplicate existing national and local planning policies. However, it underlines the importance the community places on their protection and enhancement.

4.3 Safeguarding and Supporting Important Community Facilities

187. The parish has a strong sense of community and identity. This is reflected in the wide range of local activities and social interaction that take place, including village fairs, charity fundraising events, the annual scarecrow weekend, community film nights, social evenings, clubs and societies and the work of an active parish council.
188. These activities are centred on the parish's three main community buildings: St Martin's Church, The Black Lion Public House and Firbeck Village Hall. These buildings, and the activities and services they support, play an important role in meeting the health, welfare and social needs of residents. They also act as focal points for community spirit and pride, provide local employment and reduce the need to travel as well as contributing to quality of life and sustainable development.
189. However, the parish has experienced a gradual decline in community facilities. During consultation, many residents also highlighted the lack of facilities for children and young people.
190. There is concern that, if unchecked, this decline will continue and have an adverse effect on the parish.

191. Through the preparation of the Plan, several facilities were identified as being especially important to the community because of their location, accessibility, and the valuable role they play. In particular:
- St Martin's Church
 - The Black Lion Public House
 - Firbeck Village Hall
192. Policies SP62 (Safeguarding Community Facilities) and SP63 (Loss of Public Houses) in the Local Plan provide general protection for important community facilities. These policies, and the types of facility they cover, have been considered in preparing the Plan and are regarded as sound. The Plan does not seek to replace them. Instead, it adds local detail by identifying the three facilities listed above as being of particular importance to the community and, therefore, worthy of full protection under Policies SP62 and SP63.
193. In addition to protecting these facilities, there is a need, where possible, to enhance existing provision through physical improvements and the introduction of new community facilities.
194. There may also be circumstances where development proposals for new or improved community may come forward. These will be generally supported where they accord with national and local planning policy, so not adversely affect local amenity; respect the distinctive character of the parish are compatible with the parish's Green Belt designation and meet a need that clearly benefits parish residents rather than a wider catchment area.

Assets of Community Value

195. The registration of Assets of Community Value is a separate, non-planning legal process. It can be initiated by a parish council or community group and is administered by Rotherham MBC. Inclusion on the council's Register of Assets of Community Value gives a parish council or other community organisation an opportunity to bid for the asset on behalf of the local community if it is offered for sale on the open market.
196. At present, no assets in the parish are registered with Rotherham MBC. However, through the preparation of the Plan, the community has identified several assets that are considered especially important to community life. The Parish Council, therefore, intends to put these forward to Rotherham MBC for designation as Assets of Community Value. The legislation does not allow either a neighbourhood plan or a parish council to make the designation itself.
197. The Plan can, however, support the retention and, where possible, the enhancement of any assets in the parish that are designated by Rotherham MBC as Assets of Community Value.
198. Including a specific policy on Assets of Community Value in the Plan provides an opportunity to give them formal recognition in the planning system. It ensures that their designation is a material consideration and must be taken into account in relevant planning decisions.

POLICY FNP7: ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Development proposals that support the continued use, appreciation or community value of an Asset of Community Value listed on Rotherham MBC's Register of Assets of Community Value will be

supported. Proposals involving the loss of such an asset through change of use will only be supported where it is demonstrated that the asset is no longer viable or needed by the community, or where it would be replaced by an equivalent or better facility, in terms of quantity and quality, in an equally suitable location.

4.4 Enhancing Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways

199. The parish is served by an extensive network of footpaths and, to a lesser extent, bridleways and cycleways. These routes are used and enjoyed by residents as well as many visitors to the parish. Walking, cycling and horse riding are popular activities in the parish.
200. Access to good-quality and safe public footpaths, bridleways and cycleways is important for health and wellbeing. It can reduce reliance on private vehicles, encourage active travel, and support both environmental objectives and quality of life.
201. Consultation shows that the community wishes to see these routes protected and, where possible, enhanced. In particular, concerns were raised about gaps in the existing network and the condition and maintenance of some routes.
202. It is recognised that improvements to the footpath, bridleway and cycleway network often require the agreement of relevant landowners. The Parish Council will work with landowners, Rotherham MBC and other interested parties to help secure such improvements where opportunities arise.

POLICY FNP8: ENHANCING FOOTPATHS, BRIDLEWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS

The enhancement and extension of the existing network of footpaths, bridleways and cycleways will be supported where this does not harm local character or amenity. Priority will be given to proposals that extend and connect the existing network, particularly routes linking Firbeck village with the surrounding countryside, nearby villages and local centres especially Maltby and Dinnington. Development proposals should protect and, where possible, enhance footpaths, bridleways and cycleways.

5. Monitoring

203. The Plan will be monitored throughout the period to 2041 to ensure that it, and the policies it contains, remain relevant and effective. Monitoring will include reviewing:
 - planning decisions to assess how the Plan is being applied in practice;
 - any changes in national planning policy, guidance or legislation;
 - any changes in or local planning policy or guidance; and
 - any other changes in the parish (social, economic and environmental).