

Southwold Neighbourhood Development Plan

Independent Examiner's Clarification Note

Context

This note sets out my initial comments on the submitted Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. For the avoidance of any doubt matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

Initial Comments

The Plan is well-presented. The quality of the maps is very good. The distinction between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. The combination of these matters generates a very readable and interesting document. The Character Area Appraisal is a particularly helpful and informative document.

The Plan provides a clear and distinctive vision for the neighbourhood area and has focused on appropriate and distinctive matters.

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area. I am now in a position to raise some initial issues for clarification for the Town Council. The comments that are made on these points will be used to assist in the preparation of my report. They will also inform any potential modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

Points for Clarification

Policy SWD5

Does the second criterion relate to residential amenity in general and to the issues included in paragraph 4.46 of the Plan in particular?

Policy SWD6

The policy takes a distinctive and positive approach to this increasingly-important national issue. It helpfully incorporates the National Design Guide's characteristics of well-designed buildings and places. It carefully overlaps with earlier work undertaken on the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the associated Management Plan. In addition, the policy is very well-developed in the way in which it addresses the character areas identified in the Character Area Appraisal.

Policy SWD8

Is saw the mix of national and independent retail uses in the town centre during the visit. As such the intention of the policy is self-evident.

I understand the context to the policy as set out in paragraph 7.6. Nevertheless:

- does the Town Council have any direct evidence on the extent to which extended retail premises are beyond the reach of independent traders?
- what would be regarded as a 'material' increase in the size of a retail unit?
- would it be reasonable for a planning policy to prevent or delay an extension to a retail unit where it was necessary to ensure the operational efficiencies of the existing retailer?

- is the marketing exercise in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan directly applicable to the circumstances anticipated by this policy?
- to what extent is the submitted policy in general conformity with the final section of Policy WLP8.19 of the Local Plan?

Policy SWD9

The reference in the policy to B1 uses will need to be modified to reflect the changes made to the Use Classes Order in 2020.

Does the Town Council have any comments on the implications of the Use Classes Order 2020 in general, and the introduction of the new Class E in particular, on the submitted policy?

Policy SWD13

This policy is well-developed and is locally-distinctive. The proposed Local Green Spaces have been carefully selected to reflect the criteria for such designations in the NPPF.

Policy SWD14

I am minded to recommend a modification to the first part of the policy so that the criteria would apply as relevant to the scale, nature and location of development within the neighbourhood area. As submitted the policy would apply to all development proposals, most of which will be minor or domestic in nature and would not trigger the need for such an approach.

Does the Town Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy SWD16

The policy is written in a robust and compelling fashion and is underpinned by the associated supporting text. The incorporation of the Ingleton Wood Design Framework work into the policy is best practice. This approach will supplement the wider approach on design in Policy SWD6.

Maps

In the map labelled as 15.2 (Policy Areas SWD 10 and SWD 16) on page 86 of the Plan the key at the top of the map refers to policies SWD14 and SDW8. In addition, the red outline indicating the Southwold settlement boundary is slightly different to settlement boundary in the Waveney Local Plan. The map in the neighbourhood plan indicates that the settlement boundary has been extended to include the Millennium Field.

Please can the Town Council explain its thinking on these matters?

Non-Policy Actions

The Plan follows national advice in distinguishing the non-policy actions from the land use policies. In addition, the Actions are locally-distinctive. In several cases they would complement the land-use policies in the Plan.

Representations

Does the Town Council wish to comment on any of the representations received on the Plan?

In particular does it wish to comment on the representations from:

- East Suffolk Council;
- Mr and Mrs Fletcher (via Artisan Planning and Property Services); and
- Mr Peter Cronin.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the various questions by 15 September 2021. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It reflects the factual basis of the questions raised.

In the event that certain responses are available before others I am happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled please can all responses be sent to me by East Suffolk Council and make direct reference to the policy/issue concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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25 August 2021