

Easton Neighbourhood Plan Examination

Questions of clarification from the Examiner to the Parish Council and ESC

Easton Parish Council and East Suffolk Council response

Having completed my initial review of the Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan), I would be grateful if both Councils could kindly assist me as appropriate in answering the following questions which either relate to matters of fact or are areas in which I seek clarification or further information. Please do not send or direct me to evidence that is not already publicly available.

1. ESC, in their representation, indicates that paragraph 4.7 on page 23 of the Plan would benefit from amendment. I invite the Steering Group to provide wording for a revised paragraph that would address this concern.

The revised wording proposed is:

4.7 – Within the parish there are a number of ~~non-statutory~~ landscape character types, which designations that both reflect the landscape characteristics and inform its use, these include Valley Meadowlands, Rolling Estate Claylands, and Ancient Estate Claylands. Reference to these can be found in ~~t~~The Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment and Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment notes that, ‘The landscape surrounding village is predominantly rolling countryside with areas of woodland and a mixture of large arable fields with occasional isolated dwellings and small winding roads, large skies and stunning views. The distinctive serpentine estate wall lines the road down and into the village’.³

Footnote 3: Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment Final Report July 2018, <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/First-Draft-Local-Plan/SCDC-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment, <https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/>

2. Please could the Parish Council confirm whether the fourth criterion of Policy ETN1 is separate and additional to the other three criteria and forms part of the growth strategy i.e. two and three bedroomed homes will be supported in addition to commitments, the proposed site allocation, windfall sites and infill development across the Plan area?

It can be confirmed that 4 will become a paragraph to support the policy points 1 to 3.

3. ESC suggest, and, noting the Parish Council have no objections, I agree, that the second part of Policy ETN1 be split and formed into a separate policy. Please could the Parish Council provide some suggested supporting text be provided for the policy, taking account of ESC’s comments on the reference to the draft Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document in their representation?

The proposed additional Policy and wording to be:

POLICY ETN2 – CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO DWELLINGS

Where planning permission is required, proposals for the conversion of redundant or disused agricultural buildings outside the settlement boundary (figure 24) into dwellings will be supported where:

1. the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for extension, significant alteration or reconstruction; a submission detailing the conversion

specifications, setting out full details of all works proposed, which must be based on a detailed Structural Survey; and ~~The emerging East Suffolk Council 'Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document' 5 provides supplementary planning documentation that addresses issues associated with barn conversions in the countryside.~~

2. the proposal is a high-quality design and the method of conversion retains the character and historic interest of the building; a heritage statement should be provided with any planning application related to converting barns or outbuildings; and
3. the proposal would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting of the building, and the creation of a residential curtilage and any associated domestic paraphernalia would not have a harmful effect on the character of the site or setting of the building, any wider group of buildings, or the surrounding area.

Supporting text for Policy ETN2:

Conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings

7.7 - The emerging East Suffolk Council 'Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document' SPD provides planning guidance that addresses issues associated with barn conversions in the countryside.

7.8 - The East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policy SCLP5.5: 'Conversions of Buildings in the Countryside for Housing' relates to the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings and is listed under 'Relevant Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policies.'

Policies box: Add: Emerging SPD-Rural Development and Amend title SCLP5.5 – 'Conversions of Buildings in the Countryside for Housing'

Note: Policies numbering and references to throughout the document will be amended

4. Is it the intention of the Plan to amend the settlement boundary to include the proposed site allocation in Policy ETN2?

Yes. It is the intention that the settlement boundary would include the site allocation.

5. In relation to the Easton Conceptual Development Approach to Allocated Site document which has been prepared by AECOM two queries arise.
 1. Are some of the photographs included within the AECOM document of sites other than the site proposed for allocation or perhaps they are labelled incorrectly? If so, please could you advise me of the page numbers in the document?

The photographs are correctly labelled. The two amber sites that were further assessed under the AECOM Masterplan document – 1st edition September 2020 are sites 739 and 516. The photos for site 739 are retained in the revised 2nd edition of AECOM Conceptual Development Approach – October 2023

2. Is it Option 2 or 3 that is preferred as there seems to be some confusion in the document?

Option 3 is the preferred layout for site 516

6. With regard to Policy ETN4, please could the Parish Council check and confirm that all the important views/viewpoints have been transposed accurately on the Policies Maps? If any changes are needed, please specify them.

It can be confirmed that important views/viewpoints have been transposed correctly

7. ESC state that ESC has been incorrectly identified as the owner of a proposed Local Green Space, the Eaton closed cemetery green space around All Saints Church. Please could the Parish Council confirm whether or not the correct owner has been consulted regarding the proposed designation?

It can be confirmed that the correct owner has not been consulted. We would be happy to consult with St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese, now that we are aware of the correct ownership.

8. With regard to Policy ETN8, please could the Parish Council check and confirm that all the proposed Non-designated Heritage Assets are a) shown and b) shown accurately on the Policies Maps? In addition, there seems to be three "20"s; is that right? If any changes are needed, please specify them.

It is proposed to mark the 3 heritage signposts as: 20a, 20b and 20c

Also that 21 – The stone wall, The Street, Car Park and adjacent land is missing on the Policy map, number 21 needs to be placed on the map.

It is considered appropriate for the exact boundaries of the NDHAs to be mapped and included within the Neighbourhood Plan and/or a supporting document (e.g. 'Appraisal of Non-Designated Heritage Assets'). This is to ensure the impacts of a development proposal on the NDHAs can be robustly assessed.

9. In relation to Policy ETN9, paragraph 9.13 of the supporting text indicates that this was produced before the National Model Design Code came into being, but the version of the Design Guide submitted is dated September 2023. Therefore I think this paragraph needs to be updated. If this is the case, please could the Parish Council provide the revised wording?

The proposed re wording for paragraph 9.13 is:

~~9.13 - The Guidelines were produced before the National Model Design Code was published by the Government in July 2021. However, the Guidelines do reflect the ambitions of the Model Design Code insofar that detailed principles for the consideration of aspects of development design particular to Easton are contained within it. These~~The Easton Design Guide guidelines reflects the National Model Design Code published in July 2021. Aspects of development design particular to Easton are contained within the Design Guide, the principles are reproduced in Appendix 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan. and It is expected that, as appropriate to the development proposal, planning applications should demonstrate how they satisfy the principles.

10. Reference is made in Policy ETN9 to "Important Open Areas" and indicates they are identified on the Policies Maps. I assume this is now a redundant phrase, but please advise.

Yes, it is a redundant phrase and will be changed to Local Green Spaces.

Thank you very much for your help on these matters.

It may be the case that, on receipt of your anticipated assistance on these matters, that I may need to ask for further clarification or that further queries will occur as the examination progresses. These queries are raised without prejudice to the outcome of the examination.

Please remember to only send me information that is already within the public domain.

Please note that this list of clarification questions is a public document and that your answers will also be in the public domain. Both my questions and your responses should be placed on the Councils' websites as appropriate.

With many thanks,

Ann Skippers
Independent Examiner
7 February 2024