

Otley Neighbourhood Plan

Introductory Notes

Prepared by

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1. I am delighted to have been appointed as the examiner to the Otley Neighbourhood Plan and I look forward to working with both the East Suffolk Council's officers and Otley Parish Council team on this examination.
2. My first task, after reading the documentation, is to make a visit to the parish, which will be unaccompanied. I plan to make my visit in the early part of the week after Easter and this will enable me to familiarise myself with the village and the surrounding countryside.
3. On my return, I prepare what is known as the Initial Comments document. In most cases, I can confirm at that stage whether I will need to call a public hearing. In relatively few cases, I do have to delay that decision until I have received the responses to my questions raised in this Initial Comments document. Most examinations proceed based on the written material only. I normally allow each party three weeks to respond to my questions.
4. My default position is always to ask that any documents issued, whether prepared by myself as examiner or as a response, should be placed on the relevant neighbourhood plan website. This will allow interested parties and the public to be able to follow the progress of the examination. There may be some e-mail exchanges, which I initiate, where I am merely seeking to clarify matters or make logistical arrangements, which are not necessary to be placed in the public domain.
5. It is important that any examination proceeds in an open, transparent and even-handed way. My normal practise is to copy in both the district council and the parish council into any correspondence. Similarly, I will ask that in responding to me, each party copies in the other, so that everyone knows what has been submitted. The only areas where I will not be copying the parish council, relates to the contractual matters regarding my appointment which will be directly between myself and the East Suffolk Council.
6. In preparing for my site visit, I will ask East Suffolk Council to send me electronic copies of any Regulation 16 consultation responses received. I understand the consultation period ended on 9th April 2025. Please be assured that I intend to offer the parish council the opportunity to comment on these Regulation 16 submissions, when I issue my Initial Comments document.
7. In the unlikely event, that I do need to call for a public hearing, I will contact Jason Beck at the Council by telephone and will ask him to liaise with the parish clerk, to find a suitable date and venue, hopefully in the parish. If a hearing is required, I will set out the arrangements and the matters to be discussed in a Notice of Public Hearing document.
8. Once I will receive responses to the Initial Comments, I will proceed to prepare my report, but if I find that I need to seek further clarification or an elaboration on specific responses, I will set that out in an Additional Comments note.

9. Upon completion of my draft report, I will send it to both the parish council and the Council for fact checking. A fact check is not an opportunity for either party to challenge my recommendations or conclusions but to point out any factual errors. It also helps to identify “typos”. I normally allow a week for fact checking and I will then issue my final report which is sent to both parties although it is formally submitted to East Suffolk Council as local planning authority.

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Independent Examiner to the Otley Neighbourhood Plan