

Westerfield 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 very well-presented. The distinction between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. Photographs produced to a high quality reinforce the issues included in the Plan. The various Appraisals/Assessments are informative supporting documents and directly inform the relevant policies.

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

Points for Clarification and other comments on the policies

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area. I am now able to raise some initial issues for clarification for the Parish 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.

Policy WFD1

The definition of the Landscape Buffer on Map 5 is not immediately obvious. Is it the arc? If so, should I conclude that the Buffer is a general concept, rather than defined parcels of land? Please can the Parish Council advise on this matter.

In addition, is the reference to minimising the harm to heritage assets incidental to the intended purpose of the buffer to prevent settlement coalescence?

Policy WFD2

Am I correct to conclude that the sensitivity of the landscape relates to the potential impact of development proposals on the heritage assets on the western side of Westerfield Road rather than to the inherent landscape quality and/or sensitivity of the land concerned?

Policy WFD3

The policy properly takes the matter-of-fact approach as set out in paragraph 107 of the NPPF.

Proposed Local Green Spaces 3 and 4 have attracted representations. There is an opportunity to respond to those representations later in this Note. However, in general terms, does the Parish Council wish to provide further details about these two proposed Local Green Spaces beyond those in the relevant Appraisal (Appendix 2)?

Policy WFD4

I note that the views in the policy overlap with those which were identified in Section 6 of the Landscape Appraisal. Ipswich School comments about the differences between the views in the Plan/Appraisal and those in the Design Guide and Codes. It would be helpful if the Parish Council explained its overall approach to the identification of Important Views and the differences in the evidence base.

There is an opportunity later in this Note for the Parish Council to respond to the specific representations which have been received on the policy.

In general, the representations comment that the combination of the various views and the wording of the policy largely restricts the possibility of future development, including the expansion of essential infrastructure. They also comment that such an approach conflicts with the ambitions of both local and national planning policies, and does not allow for a contribution to sustainable development. It would be helpful if the Parish Council commented on these matters, and its overall ambitions for the policy.

In addition, could the policy be worded in a positive rather than a negative way?

Policy WFD6

This is an excellent policy. In the round, it is a first-class local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy WFD8

I am minded to recommend that the order of the policy elements is reversed. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy WFD9

This is another excellent policy. I saw the importance of the footpath network during the visit.

Representations

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations from:

- Ambury Development
- Anglian Water
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Ipswich School
- Mr and Mrs Pipe
- Suffolk County Council

East Suffolk Council proposes a series of detailed refinements to the policies and the supporting text. It would be also helpful if the Parish Council commented on those suggestions.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 19 December 2024. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It reflects the factual basis of the questions raised.

If 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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28 November 2024