

Wickham Market Neighbourhood Development Plan

Response to Independent Examiners Note

Introduction

1. Thank you for sending us the Wickham Market Development Plan Independent Examiner's Clarification Note. Wickham Market Parish Council have had time to study the note and the information provided below should provide the clarification that is required.

Background

2. The Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan has taken a long time to write for two main reasons. The first is that during the period two new local plans have been issued and the second was the Coronavirus pandemic. Each time a new local plan has been issued we have had to revise the detail of our policies and supporting text and it has been difficult to ensure that all aspects were covered. Often the wording in the new local plan almost mirrored what we had written in the Neighbourhood Plan and then we had to decide if the wording in our plan was still required or whether it should be modified to be Wickham Market specific.
3. At the start of our Neighbourhood Plan it was felt that Wickham Market should have some further development before 2036 and, at the time, this was not reflected in the Local Plan. Consequently, our Neighbourhood Plan was assessed as being "complex" and we were given additional funding for external reports. At the outset we looked at the best place to locate new houses and discussed the options with an officer from East Suffolk Council, the Wickham Gate site in Pettistree was discussed as a possibility. Pettistree Parish Council had decided not to join us in our neighbourhood plan and therefore we could not consider this as a possibility as it was outside our Parish boundary. The next issue of the Local Plan - Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies dated Jan 2017, confirmed detail proposed in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan that Wickham Market should provide 116 houses in our neighbourhood area. This corresponded with the land available at Old School Farm and for Simon's Cross sites.
4. This local plan was assessed as not providing enough housing to meet government targets and hence a revision of this plan was started immediately. The next revision of the Local Plan, dated Sep 2020, contained Policy SCLP12.60 (Wickham Gate), a development of approximately 150 houses in Pettistree, but within the Settlement Boundary of Wickham Market. This policy was included despite Wickham Market and Pettistree both objecting to it. The new housing allocation for Wickham Market given in SCLP12.1 was 70 plus Policy SCLP12.60. The Old School Farm site and the SCLP12.60 site both belonged to the same landowner. As the SCLP12.60 site did not need any preparatory works and has easy highway access this project was started first and the development is well underway.
5. Pettistree and Wickham Market decided that that the SCLP12.60 development should be within the Parish boundary of Wickham Market Parish as opposed to Pettistree, and a boundary change has been proposed by WMPC and accepted by ESC and will happen in Apr 23. The landowner preferred to develop Wickham Gate first but has declared a desire to keep the Old School Farm land available for development within the timeframe of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Response to Initial Comments by the Examiner
(Queries are set out in Italics and responses are in red)

6. Policy WICK1

'The ambition of the policy is self-evident.

However, is part B of the policy needed given the details in Policies WICK 12 and 13?

It was felt that a summary of the policies of WICK12 and WICK13 was required in the overarching policy. Perhaps WICK1 A and B can be combined and this could be shortened.

Similarly, is Part C of the policy needed as it restates local plan policies?

Part C is no longer needed.

7. Policy WICK2

'This is a very well-considered policy which is underpinned by the Landscape Character Appraisal?

Is it intended that the policy would be applied in a proportionate way?'

Yes, we hope that the policy wording makes clear what is intended.

Should the policy refer to 'enhancements' where this approach is both reasonable and practicable? Otherwise, it may be difficult to apply consistently.

Yes We consider that the policy should refer to enhancements in order to ensure that the development achieves what is set out in the policy and also ensures that landscape benefits and as a result, ecological benefits arise. Enhancements should result from a thorough site appraisal and good design and as such a consistent approach should be achieved.

8. Policy WICK4

'Is it intended that part A the policy would be applied in a proportionate way? By way of example a proposal for a new shopfront would not directly relate to this part of the policy'.

Yes, it is intended that the policy should be applied in a proportionate way and this could be mentioned and clarified.

9. Policy WICK6

'The policy includes a good selection of local green spaces based on the related Assessment document.

I am minded to recommend that the policy element is modified so that it takes the matter-of-fact approach in 103 of the NPPF. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?'

We are happy with this suggestion (i.e. approach for managing development consistent with Green Belt approach) and are content for you to clarify this.

10. Policy WICK7

Part A of the policy is a comment rather than a policy. I am minded to recommend that parts A and B of the policy are combined to remedy this issue. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

It is agreed that this is a sensible suggestion.

Does part D of the policy bring any added value beyond national and local policies on conservation areas?

We consider that Part D does add value, we wish to re-state the need to resist harmful development. Perhaps this should read 'development which neither enhances or preserves the character of the CA or is harmful will generally be resisted'.

11. Policy WICK8

'For my clarity does part A of the policy relate to the 18 assets listed in paragraph 6.12? If so are 17 and 18 'heritage assets' in the overall context of this policy?' Part A does relate to the 18 assets. Part B applies structures only. ESC suggested that we include the two areas of ancient woodland as Non-Designated Heritage Assets, this is in accordance with the NPPF and ESC guidance. The Local Plan criteria only applies to buildings/structures so there are no criteria to judge sites against. Potsford Wood also provides the setting for the Gibbet. This has already had some benefit as the landowner was unaware of ancient woodland designation.

'Has the Parish Council assessed Part B of the policy against paragraph 203 of the NPPF?'

The Parish Council has not specifically assessed Part B against paragraph 203 of the NPPF, however we consider that our WICK8 Policy complies with the NPPF.

12. Policy WICK9

'Does this policy bring any added value beyond the contents of the Suffolk County Council Parking Guidance?'

We fully support the SCC Parking Guidance and the benefits it seeks to achieved. The Local Plan does not require all aspects of this guidance to be followed. However, WICK9 states that the SCC Guidance should followed in full. See NP Para 7.4.

13. Policy WICK10

'Should part B of the policy be supporting text given that it explains how Part A of the policy might be implemented rather than being a policy in its own right?' In Wickham Market we have been working with EDF on traffic calming measures to mitigate the impact of traffic arising as a result of Sizewell C's Southern Park & Ride car park planned for just north of the village. The aim of Part B is to take account of these works and to ensure that funding is secured for some mitigation measures which might include speed reduction to 20mph (as requested by some residents).

14. Policy WICK11

'This is a very good policy.'

15. Site Assessment

'Is the Parish Council satisfied that the Site Selection report remains up-to-date and can be provides robust evidence to justify the sites selected and discounted?'

It is appreciated that a new SHELAA has been published since our site assessment report was published. The Site Assessment reports for Wickham Market within the SHELAA contain many inaccuracies and were not passed WMPC for review before publication. Consequently it is not surprising that there are inconsistencies between the potentially available sites in our Neighbourhood Plan and the SHELAA. We believe the most appropriate sites have been selected for development.

The evidence which was used to select the sites for development is still as relevant now as it was when the site selections were made.

'Is there a degree of tension between the proposed housing allocations and the contents of Policies WICK 3 and 8?'

It has been accepted that Wickham Market must provide some areas for housing development. We were conscious that WICK3 and identified views 11, 12, 13 might be impacted but the policy was written to take this concern into account, hence criteria c. of WICK 8 and the wording of WICK3. The sites chosen were assessed to have the least impact on Wickham Market's key views. The setting of the village can be best seen from outside the Parish Boundary, we were advised that such views could not be considered as the locations were outside the area and scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is our view that the detrimental effect on Wickham Market's key views (7, 8, 9) caused by development located SCLP12.60 (under construction) is significant with little mitigation secured through the planning process, despite WMPC best efforts. The visual impacts are adverse and far worse than the developments proposed at WICK12 and WICK13.

It is appreciated that the setting of 3 of the Non-Designated Heritage Assets is affected by policies WICK12 and WICK13, however this is felt to be acceptable.

We recognise that development at WICK12 could have some adverse impacts on the setting of The Old School however we hope that this can be sensitively incorporated into a new development and also retained to provide for business and/or community use. Hence there are benefits for the building and the parish. With respect to development alongside the Cemetery (northern boundary) we are also aware that there will be visual impacts from new houses (as with houses at Morris Road) and this will undermine some of the special qualities of the cemetery. However, we are improving the tree stock / screening at the cemetery on a regular basis and expect sensitive design as set out in Criteria i. If supported, we would like to suggest that this be strengthened by adding text stating ... *'sensitive design and an avenue of trees in the area'*

Is the Parish Council satisfied that the two allocated sites are available for development and will be developed in the Plan period?

The Parish Council is certain that the Simons Cross will be developed within the plan period. With regard to land at Old School Farm the owner wishes to keep this site allocated so that it can be developed towards the end of the plan period. This timescale is acceptable to the Parish Council. A local housing developer (Hopkins Homes now Tilia Homes) has carried out assessment, draft design and public consultation in 2018 so it is feasible that this work could be resurrected and progressed.

16. Policy WICK12

'Criterion d comments about the Old School House. To what extent has the policy assessed its inherent value as a proposed non-designated heritage asset and the way in which this may affect both the principle of development and influence the design and layout of the site?'

The inherent value has not been assessed by WMPC but we have considered the setting and considered previous informal proposals as set out above. We would expect the development to assess and provide enhancement of the Old School and its setting. The back half of the building is a much later addition and significantly detracts from the overall look of the building. The Old School building does make access to the site a little more difficult, but the draft plans submitted by Hopkins Homes have shown that this can be resolved without issue.

Should the contents of paragraph 8.7 be weaved into the policy?

We agree that the contents of paragraph 8.7 should be weaved into the policy and that paragraph 8.13 should be included within WICK 13.

17. Policy WICK13

‘Should the policy comment about the relationship between the proposed new houses and the existing houses in Simon’s Cross to the east?’

The Heritage and Character Assessment is not particularly complementary regarding the houses on the Simon’s Cross estate. However, we agree that the relationship to existing housing and residential outlook is important. As such we would support additional wording and suggest the following:

‘the boundaries of the site area should be carefully designed with vegetation and new planting integrated to provide softening. The outlook for properties in Simons Cross with views towards the site should be considered carefully with visual impacts reduced by plot design, orientation and boundary planting.’

‘Have the contents of criterion e and paragraph 8.12 been overtaken by events?’ This aspect has not been overtaken by events. We are not aware that ESC has produced any further guidance on this matter. The current play area is very run down (the land is privately owned and the play area is no longer managed by ESC) and totally inadequate for the Simon’s Cross estate. It is our objective that the new development will provide a play area that will be well used by the occupants of the new development as well as the existing Simon’s Cross residents.

‘In criterion d is the bridleway that which runs along the western boundary of Simon’s Cross?’

Yes, the bridleway runs the complete length of the eastern side of the site. There is a public right of way cutting across the site area which also need to be assimilated or diverted.

‘Should the contents of paragraph 8.13 be weaved into the policy?’

Yes, we agree this should be weaved into the policy.

Representations

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

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

18. Anglian Water

- a. The Parish Council thank Anglian water for their positive comments and recommend that all suggestions for amendment are accepted in full.

19. East Suffolk Council;

- a. Chapter 2 – Local Context. It would seem to be sensible to mention the Sizewell C Park and Ride as this project now has Development Consent and the Park and Ride, although not in Wickham Market, will have an impact on the village.
- b. Chapter 4 – Development Strategy. Proposed changes noted and agreed.
- c. Chapter 5 – Landscape and Environment. Change agreed.
- d. Policy WICK4 – The recommendation to reference mitigation hierarchy is supported and the second sentence in Para 5.18 should be deleted.
- e. Chapter 6 – Historic Environment. Agreed.

- f. Chapter 7 – Transport and Movement. As the development of Sizewell C is now more definite it would be appropriate to follow the guidance suggested.
- g. Chapter 8 – Site Allocations. The comment is addressed elsewhere in this response. The comments referring to the text are agreed.
- h. Policy WICK12 – Land at Old School Farm. It is agreed that a map would be beneficial. The Parish Council feel that the comment criterion c is essential. It is this criterion that prevents vehicular access onto Walnuts Lane and ensures that Wickham Market and Pettistree do not coalesce.
- i. Policy WICK13 – Land at Simon’s cross. Agreed.
- j.

20. Suffolk Wildlife Trust;

- a. The comments from Suffolk Wildlife Trust are very comprehensive. If we had these comments at the start or at the Regulation 14 consultation stage all comments could have been included with ease. Paragraph 174 (d) and paragraph 179 of the NPPF talk about establishing a coherent ecological network and wildlife corridors and this is something that should have been done at the outset and whilst this can be done at this stage it will reflect what is possible given the decisions that we have already made. WICK4 Paragraph A does mention wildlife corridors and this paragraph could be strengthened to better reflect the requirements of the NPPF and this should be done. We are more dubious about the value of producing a wildlife corridor map at this stage. All development proposals should be underpinned by good quality landscape assessment/appraisal and habitat survey work in any event. The approach outlined by SWT would involve significant work, time delay and costs to the WMPC for consultants to undertake.
- b. At a local level we work (as volunteers) with one our landowners and the WMPC to secure hedgerow and tree planting, with the intention of landscape and biodiversity enhancement. This work commenced some 30 years and has been informed and supported by local knowledge, The Suffolk Hedgerow Survey for the parish and the Suffolk Tree Warden Network. However, there is limited support from farming landowners and ESC (advice and funding both lacking) for this landscape enhancement with fears regarding crop shading, land loss and management costs. With respect to new development, we have had limited success in ensuring that Hopkins Homes (building at the southern edge of the village) comply with the need to both protect existing vegetation and plant new native landscape and habitat corridors. Whilst we wish to ensure that better results are achieved for future developments it is not clear how a Parish wide survey can assist.

21. Berlain Ltd; and

- a. The thrust of the Berlain response was two fold, firstly to improve the traffic and parking issues within the village by providing funding and the second was offering a site which would give 50 homes. With regard to the traffic and parking issues WMPC have now developed a much more comprehensive plan which is due to be funded by EDF as part of the Sizewell C works. With regard to the development of the site it has a number of drawbacks and has previously been refused planning permission by ESC. The main drawbacks are:
 - i. The land has been classed as “not appropriate for allocation within the NP” in the Site Assessment report.

- ii. The area is within the Deben Valley and as such has a number of restrictions outlined in the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Appraisal
- iii. The Landscape Appraisal commissioned for the Neighbourhood Plan considered the area concerned and concludes that the field in which the development is proposed is a “Land parcel with HIGH sensitivity to residential development”.
- iv. The access road goes through the Glebe allotments would result in the loss of about 25% of the allotments. The allotment site is already fully utilised with a waiting list. The Glebe allotments are proposed as designated Local Green Space and are also registered as an asset of Community Value.
- v. Yew Tree Rise is a completely inadequate to take the additional traffic this development would bring.
- vi. They have proposal to provide car parking for the George Community Pub. The George management committee have been approached and they have expressly said that they do not want a car park as they want to encourage residents to walk or cycle to the pub. There is adequate village centre parking for visitors.

22. Colin Carter (both generally and on the Site Assessment in particular).

- a. The Housing Need Assessment gave us a target for the number of houses we would need to accommodate over the period of the Neighbourhood Plan. This figure has been updated twice as the Local Plan has been updated. See Policy SCLP12.1. The Basic Conditions Statement for the Neighbourhood Plan clearly demonstrates how the Plan meets the required Basic Conditions.
- b. The Carter Family were originally approached by the Parish Council with respect to them considering the development of a small parcel of land to the west of the Riverside Industrial estate for business development. They declined to consider this option and hence the business development expansion was removed from the draft NP.
- c. This comment refers to the representation wanting to have a development of 46 dwellings on the site just south of the Dallinghoo Road. This site is shown in the SHELAA as “7 Land adj to 14 and 16 The Crescent, Dallinghoo Road”. In the Site Assessment report for the Neighbourhood Plan this is shown as site 4b and is shown not appropriate for allocation in NP.
- d. This comment relates to the representation proposing to have a development on sites 1045 and 785 as shown in the SHELAA dated Dec 18. On site 1045, which is to the west of the Riverside Industrial estate, has been shown as suitable for housing and site 785, which is directly to the north of Riverside Industrial estate for industrial development. Site 1045 is part of 1b in the Neighbourhood Plan Site Assessment report and is assessed as “potentially appropriate if issues can be resolved or mitigated”. Site 785 is not appropriate for development as Anglian Water have stated in the past that this site is directly above their water bearing aquifer and the risk of contamination is too great.
- e. It is worth noting that at a late stage in the Neighbourhood Plan process they applied to develop Jubilee and Low Farm Fields. The Consultation Statement states;

- i. Between July and December 2018, the landowner of Jubilee and Low Farm fields offered these fields to ESC for future development. These fields are at the north of Wickham Market between the B1078 and the River Deben. However, no comment from the landowner or his agent was received in response to the Regulation 14 consultation. In Sep 2020 the Parish Council were asked to consider including these fields within the NP. The Parish Council considered this request at the PC meeting on 21 Sep 20 under Item 11.2 and decided that this land could not be considered at this stage.
- f. The agent for the landowner sent a letter to the Parish Council on 21 Sep 20 with a request that it be considered at the Parish Council meeting on the same day. The Parish Council responded explaining why development was inappropriate.