

## Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

### Examiner's Clarification Note

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 provides a clear vision for the neighbourhood area. The presentation of the Plan is excellent and the use of colour coding makes navigation through the Plan straightforward. The Plan also makes good use of maps and photographs.

Section 4 of the Plan makes a first-class connection between the Plan's Vision, the objectives, and the resulting policies. This is best practice.

### Points for Clarification

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 issues for clarification with both the Parish Council and with the District Council

The comments made on the points in this Note will be used to assist in the preparation of the examination report and in recommending any modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

### Questions for the Parish Council

I set out specific clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan:

#### *Policy VC1*

This is a good policy which is underpinned by the Design Code (Appendix 1.0) and the Character Appraisal (Appendix 2.0).

In general terms, part f of the policy follows the approach taken in paragraph 216 of the NPPF. However, the initial part comments that 'development proposals affecting an identified non-designated heritage asset should demonstrate how the proposal will preserve or enhance the significance of the asset' On what basis has the Parish Council chosen to include this specific element?

#### *Policy VC2*

I looked carefully at the Green Gap and the two Gateway Sites. I note the specific commentary about the proposed Green Gap in the Character Appraisal. There is an opportunity for the Parish Council to respond to representation on these proposed designations later in this Note.

I have three general questions on the policy as follows:

- do the opening elements of the policy (a-f) apply across the neighbourhood area (including the proposed gateway sites and the proposed Green Gap, or are the proposed gateway sites (part g) and the proposed Green Gap (part h) affected only by their own policy components?
- does the Plan's reference to the Green Gap as 'this gap is the last remaining gap between the villages of Warborough and Shillingford' relate to land to the eastern side of Thames Road?

- to what extent did the Character Appraisal assess the significance of the proposed Green Gap in relation to the existing physical interrelationship between Warborough and Shillingford along Thames Road/Warborough Road?

### *Policy VC3*

I looked at a selection of the views during the visit.

I note that the views are identified in each character area in the Character Appraisal and separately in Appendix 15. This is best practice.

There is an opportunity for the Parish Council to respond to the representation which comment on some of the identified Local Views later in this Note.

### *Policy VC4*

I am minded to recommend that the order of the two sections is reversed.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

### *Policy H2*

To what extent does the definition of infill development in paragraph 5.2.22 correspond to that in Policy H16 of the Local Plan?

### *Policy H3*

The overall thrust of the policy is appropriate. Nevertheless, I am minded to recommend that the policy's emphasis should shift from one which offers support to proposals to one which comments about requirements for development proposals. This would acknowledge that development proposals will be assessed against all relevant development plan policies.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

### *Policy C3*

I looked at the proposed additional Local Green Spaces carefully during the visit. I note that they are underpinned by the details in Appendix 3.0.

In relation to proposed LG S04 Plough Field:

- is it appropriate for a neighbourhood plan to identify the same parcel of land both as a Green Gap (in Policy VC2) and as a Local Green Space when the policy implications of the two designations are different?
- what is the size of the proposed Local Green Space?
- I note the commentary in Appendix 3.0, and saw the interesting monument during the visit. Was the World Ploughing Championship a one-off event (held in 1954) or has it been repeated since that time (either in the parish or elsewhere)?

I understand that local green spaces are appreciated and enjoyed on their merits and without regard to administrative boundaries. Nevertheless, is it appropriate for the Plan to draw attention to a Local Green Space in an adjoining neighbourhood area (as has been done on Map 31)?

### *Policy E1*

As the District Council comments, the policy appears to have reverted to that which was included in the submitted version of what is now the made neighbourhood plan, and which

was modified as an outcome of the examination of that Plan. Please can the Parish Council explain its approach, and in specific terms, how it would have regard to national policy?

*Policy ENV1*

Is there any specific evidence for the policy's expectation for the requirement for a 20% biodiversity net gain or is it an ambition rather than a policy requirement? If it is an ambition, should the policy restate the 10% national baseline for biodiversity net gain (as identified in paragraph 5.5.18 of the Plan)?

*Policy ENV2*

This is a good, locally-distinctive policy.

*Policy ENV3*

This is a good, locally-distinctive policy which has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.

Similarly, its non-prescriptive approach has regard to the Written Ministerial Statement – Planning: Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update (December 2023).

*Implementation and Monitoring*

This section of the Plan provides helpful detailed information.

I am minded to recommend that specific mention is made about the emerging Joint Local Plan in paragraph 6.2.2 and that the Parish Council will assess the need for a potential further (partial or full) review of the Plan within six months of the adoption of the emerging Joint Local Plan 2041.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

**Questions for the District Council**

Policy VC2 of the Plan proposes the designation of a Green Gap and two Gateway Sites.

In relation to the Green Gap, I have noted that the Welbeck Strategic Land representation advises about planning application P23/S4082/O. Is there any more recent planning history on the site?

Is there any relevant planning history on the two Gateway Sites?

I have already raised the issue of the monitoring and review of the Plan with the Parish Council. In this context I note that the examination of the Joint Local Plan 2041 has started. What is the expected timescale for the remainder of the examination and the adoption of the Plan?

***Representations***

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

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

- Rectory Homes (Representation 26);
- Thames Water (Representation 28);
- Welbeck Strategic Land (Representation 31);
- Oxfordshire County Council (Representation 34); and
- Julian Church and Associates (Representation 35).

In some cases, these representations overlap with the questions raised in this Note. I am happy for the Parish Council to structure its overall response as it sees fit.

The District Council proposes a series of revisions to certain policies and the supporting text in the Plan. Does the Parish Council have any comments on the suggested revisions?

***Protocol for responses***

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 1 September 2025. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

If certain responses are available before others, I would be happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled, please could it come to me directly from the District Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

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Independent Examiner

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28 July 2025