

## **Wantage Neighbourhood Development Plan**

### **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 which is underpinned by distinctive objectives.

The presentation of the Plan is good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The Plan makes good use of various high-quality maps and photographs.

#### ***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 the Town 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.

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

##### ***Policy 1***

The contents of the policy are generally appropriate. Nevertheless, the policy's format is unusual and at odds with the more traditional format of the other policies. Is it a typographical error? If not, it would be helpful if the Town Council comments on the approach taken.

##### ***Policy 2***

The first part of the policy supports the redevelopment of employment sites where they fully retain existing uses. I have three questions on this proposed approach as follows:

- is it likely that any such proposals would arise?
- would a proposal comply with the policy if it retained the existing uses and included additional uses?
- is the policy's focus on employment levels or on existing uses? If it is the latter, would the policy prevent the granting of planning permission for a proposal where the package of employment uses was refined (to a greater or lesser extent) but where employment levels would be increased?

##### ***Policy 3***

Should this policy be applied in a proportionate way to acknowledge that it would be unlikely that minor and domestic proposals would trigger its detailed elements?

##### ***Policy 4***

I am minded to recommend that the policy refers more closely to the Character Area work in the Landscape Character Area.

Does the Town Council have any comments on this proposition?

*Policy 6*

What is meant by the first criterion? Is its intention that development proposals should safeguard the identified green infrastructure network?

Is the second criterion needed as it repeats the opening element?

*Policy 7*

As submitted, the scope of the policy is unclear. Is its intention that development proposals within or adjacent to the Letcombe Brook should respond positively to its biodiversity value?

Appendix 1 is a very helpful document.

*Policy 8*

This is well-developed policy which is supported by the details in Appendix F.

There is an opportunity elsewhere in this note for the Town Council to respond to the comments made on the proposed local green spaces

*Policy 9*

I saw the importance of the Manor Road Memorial Recreation Ground during the visit.

*Policy 10*

I note the wording used in the policy. However, does the policy bring any added value to the local delivery of infrastructure included in the adopted Local Plan (and as implemented by the District Council through the development management process)?

## **Representations**

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

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

- Delancey (Representation 6);
- Pye Homes (Representation 13); and
- Oxfordshire County Council (Representation 14).

The District Council (Representation 7) proposes a series of revisions to certain policies and the supporting text in the Plan. Does the Town Council have any comments on the suggested revisions?

***Protocol for responses***

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 12 February 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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20 January 2025