

Barton Mills 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 and concise vision for the neighbourhood area. It is underpinned by a series of background documents which directly inform some of the policies. The Design Guidance and Codes, and the Appraisal of Views are particularly effective documents. This approach is best practice.

The presentation of the Plan is excellent. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. In addition, 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 Parish 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:

Development Plan Context

Paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 helpfully comment about the up-to-date context provided by the adopted Local Plan.

I note that the West Suffolk Local Plan 2045 is now being prepared in accordance with the new national plan-making system. I also note that the published timetable for the emerging Local Plan incorporates examination from October 2028 to March 2029, and adoption in May 2029. Plainly this will take place well within the Plan period of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In this context I am minded to recommend that the Plan comments about this matter and that the Parish Council undertakes to assess the need for a partial or full review within six months of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy BM1

I noted the scale and significance of the proposed Worlington Road Settlement Boundary during the visit.

Policy BM3

I looked at the proposed local green spaces carefully during the visit. This is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the details in the Local Green Spaces Assessment (Appendix 1). The policy takes the matter-of-fact approach in paragraph 108 of the NPPF.

Policy BM4

This is an important policy in the Plan. It is underpinned by the Design Guidance and Codes, and the Design Guidelines checklist (Appendix 2). In addition, the criteria in the policy are locally-distinctive. In the round, the approach taken is a first-class response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy BM6

I looked at the identified community facilities carefully during the visit. This is an excellent policy which highlights the importance of community facilities in the neighbourhood area. The approach taken also acknowledges that the use and/or viability of the identified facilities may change in the Plan period.

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 from:

- Denbury Homes;
- Upton Suffolk Farms;
- Suffolk County Council; and
- Taylor Farms.

West Suffolk Council suggests a series of refinements to the Plan. The Parish Council's comments on these suggestions would be helpful.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 8 September 2026. 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 West Suffolk Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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17 August 2026