

Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023-2040

**A report to West Suffolk Council on the Ixworth and
Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by West Suffolk Council in October 2024 to carry out the independent examination of the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 October 2024.
- 3 The Plan includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It includes policies on local green spaces, design, and the natural environment.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum area should coincide with the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
13 January 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023-2040 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to West Suffolk Council (WSC) by Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council (IITPC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises indirectly from my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It provides a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and appearance.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome, the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the neighbourhood area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by WSC, with the consent of IITPC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both WSC and IITPC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. I have 42 years' experience either in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level or since 2016 as an independent examiner. I have significant experience of undertaking neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan as submitted should proceed to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

Other examination matters

- 2.6 In examining the Plan, I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
 - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
 - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met subject to the modifications in this report.

3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the Local Green Spaces justification
- the SEA/HRA screening reports (May 2024).
- the representations made to the Plan.
- IITPC's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted St Edmundsbury Core Strategy.
- the St Edmundsbury Rural Vision
- the adopted Joint Development Management Development Plan document.
- the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan.
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023 and December 2024).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 October 2024. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations. I was assisted in this process by the comprehensive nature of many of the representations and the detail within the package of submission documents.

The update of the NPPF

3.4 The NPPF was updated on 12 December 2024. Paragraph 239 of the NPPF 2024 sets out transitional arrangements for plan-making. It comments that the policies in the Framework will apply for the purpose of preparing neighbourhood plans from 12 March 2025 unless a neighbourhood plan proposal has been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on or before the 12 March 2025.

3.5 On this basis, the examination of the Plan against the basic condition that it should regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State is based on the 2023 version of the NPPF. Plainly the Plan was submitted in 2024 in that context. Where NPPF paragraph numbers are used in this report, they refer to those in the December 2023 version.

3.6 Paragraph 6.2 of this report sets out full extent of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is examined.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such, the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), IITPC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies. The Statement summarises the approach which IITPC took on consultation and engagement as the Plan was being prepared. It is structured around the following phases:
- the initial outreach – 2017-2018 (Section 3);
 - the Plan formulation stage - 2019-2020 (Section 4);
 - the period from March 2020 – May 2021 (Section 5); and
 - the Site Allocation consultation events – 2021.
- 4.3 The Statement also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (May to July 2023).
- 4.4 Section 8 of the Statement summarises the comments received on the pre-submission version of the Plan and provides details of the ways in which the document was refined because of this process. These details help to describe the way in which the Plan evolved.
- 4.5 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. WSC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted Plan was undertaken by WSC. It ended on 22 August 2024. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
- Persimmon Homes
 - The Jiggins Trustees
 - Suffolk County Council
 - Pigeon Investments
 - Swift Bricks
 - National Highways
 - Anglian Water

- Sport England
- Bardwell Parish Council
- West Suffolk Council

4.7 A representations was also received from a parishioner.

4.8 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to specific representations on a policy-by-policy basis.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe. It lies to the north and east of Bury St Edmunds. Its population in 2021 was 2304 persons. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 20 July 2017 by the former St Edmundsbury Borough Council.
- 5.2 Ixworth is an attractive village based around the junction of High Street, Crown Lane, and Thetford Road. It has a tightly-defined historic core with more modern residential development on its fringes. St Mary the Virgin is located to the immediate west of High Street. The historic core of the village is a designated conservation area. It includes several fine historic buildings. Ixworth Thorpe lies approximately a mile to the north of Ixworth.
- 5.3 The remainder of the parish is primarily rural and in agricultural use. It includes several woodlands and watercourses.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan context is both comprehensive and evolving.
- 5.5 The 2010 St Edmundsbury Core Strategy identifies Ixworth as one of five villages as a Key Service Centre. The Core Strategy advises that these Centres generally have a wide range of services as well as local employment provision. Policy CS4 comments that the Key Service Centres will be the main focus for additional homes, jobs and community facilities outside of Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. However, the scale of growth in the individual settlements will be dependent upon the local environmental and infrastructure capacity of the settlement concerned.
- 5.6 The St Edmundsbury area Rural Vision 2031 allocated three sites for development in Ixworth Village:
 - Land at Reeves Farm (allocated for 20 dwellings) has been developed for 16 dwellings;
 - Land off Crown Lane (allocated for 90 a minimum of dwellings); and
 - Land west of A143 and south of A1088 (allocated for a minimum of 80 dwellings plus land reserved for educational use, relating to a new primary school).
- 5.7 The Regulation 19 Consultation Version of the West Suffolk Emerging Local Plan proposes to amalgamate the second and third sites in the Rural Vision into a single site which should deliver a minimum of 145 dwellings and land to accommodate a primary school and early years setting.
- 5.8 In general terms, work on the preparation of a new Local Plan for the area is well advanced. The Plan will cover the period to 2040. In May 2024 WSC submitted the Plan for its own examination. Hearing sessions took place in November and December 2024. The Draft Local Plan identifies Ixworth as a Key Rural Settlement within the proposed settlement hierarchy. The Plan advises that these settlements have the basic

services needed to support the day-to-day needs of residents including a primary school, early years provision, convenience food shop, a pub, town or village hall, a recreation area and healthcare provision. It also advises that most of key service centres have good access to the larger towns by public transport. Finally, the Plan advises that the Key Rural Settlements are the largest settlements, in terms of population, outside of the towns and provide several key services and facilities that meet the settlements' own needs, and the needs of other nearby smaller settlements.

- 5.9 The Plan has been prepared within this wider context and has relied on up-to-date information. It also seeks to give a local dimension to the relevant policies in the Local Plan. This is best practice, and the approach taken is helpfully captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.10 I visited the neighbourhood area on 24 October 2024. I approached it from the A134 to the south. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape and its accessibility to the strategic road network.
- 5.11 I looked initially at Ixworth Thorpe. I saw the range of properties on the Thetford Road, and those off Green Lane. I also took the opportunity to look at the fascinating All Saints Church.
- 5.12 I then drove to Ixworth. In doing so I looked at site AP 29 as identified in the emerging Local Plan. I then looked carefully at the character and setting of the village centre. I saw the importance of the Conservation Area, St Mary the Virgin Church, and the range of historic buildings on High Street. I also saw the range of retail, commercial and community uses in High Street.
- 5.13 I walked along Crown Lane up to the Cemetery. At that point, I looked to the north to the site identified in the emerging Local Plan (AP30). I also saw the importance of the School to the local community.
- 5.14 I then walked along Thetford Road and Commister Lane. I saw the allotments and the Moat. I then walked along Bury Road and appreciated the attractive southern setting of the village.
- 5.15 Throughout the visit I looked at the proposed Local Green Spaces. I saw that most were open green spaces within residential areas.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.
- 6.2 As part of this process, I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
 - not breach, and otherwise be compatible with, the assimilated obligations of EU legislation (as consolidated in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023; and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings:

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination, the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the development plan as described in Section 5 of this report;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic

needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy, including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies on development and environmental matters.
- 6.8 At a more practical level the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph ID: 41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. The Guidance also advises that policies should also be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted, the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. Most of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan will achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes a policy to establish a spatial strategy for the parish (Policy IXW1), and for the village centre (Policy IXW6). In the social dimension, it includes policies on the Village Hall (Policy IXW5), and local green spaces (Policy IXW10). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has policies on character and design (Policy IXW3) and on sustainable drainage (Policy IXW11). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in West Suffolk in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.9 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. Subject

to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, WSC undertook a screening exercise in May 2024 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 WSC also prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. There are no protected sites in the parish. Nevertheless, the Assessment addresses the potential impact of the Plan's policies on an extensive range of nearby protected sites. The Assessment concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on these protected sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.16 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns on this matter. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with the relevant regulations.

Human Rights

- 6.17 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Summary

- 6.18 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the Plan area. The wider community and IITPC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans should address the development and use of land. It also includes a series of Non-policy Actions.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan. The Actions are considered briefly thereafter.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on each of the policies in the Plan.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial parts of the Plan (Parts 1-3)

- 7.8 The Plan is organised and presented in a very effective way. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. The overall format of the Plan, and the associated use of colour, map and excellent photographs results in a very attractive and legible document. If the Plan is made, it will sit comfortably as part of the overall development plan.
- 7.9 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies.
- 7.10 Section 1 comments on the national agenda for neighbourhood plans and the way in which the submitted Plan has been prepared. It also comments about the planning policy context for the neighbourhood area. It defines the neighbourhood area (Map 1), and the Plan period (in paragraph 1.1). It also advises about the way in which the Plan would be monitored and reviewed.
- 7.11 Section 2 provides information about the neighbourhood area. It includes interesting and comprehensive details which help to set the scene for the eventual policies.

- 7.12 Section 3 comments about the Plan's Vision and objectives. The opening element of the Vision provides a good summary of the overall approach as follows:

'Ixworth parish: Something for everyone' 'In 2040, Ixworth parish is still a pleasant place to live. It has grown considerably in size, but its long-established character as a bustling Village with an attractive environment has been preserved. Ixworth remains a vibrant Village with its range of independent shops with good community facilities continuing to draw in local residents from the Village and the surrounding areas every day.'

- 7.13 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

Policy IXW1: Ixworth Spatial Strategy

- 7.14 This policy proposes a spatial strategy for the parish. It advises that growth expected to be concentrated within the new settlement boundary of Ixworth Village, mainly on the sites proposed for allocation in the West Suffolk emerging Local Plan. Windfall development on small infill sites within the settlement boundary will continue to come forward. Development outside the settlement boundary will only be considered acceptable if it meets the requirements of policies relating to rural development in the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD).

- 7.15 The policy acknowledges that emerging local policy (the Regulation 19 consultation version of the West Suffolk Local Plan) requires Ixworth to support growth on two site allocations of 290 dwellings. These sites are:

- Land at Bardwell Road – 145 dwellings and employment (retail) and village hall use; and
- Land off Crown Lane and west of A143 – 145 dwellings plus land for provision of a primary school and early years setting.

- 7.16 In general terms, the policy provides an appropriate spatial strategy for the parish and seeks to provide local detail beyond that which is contained in the adopted development plan and in the emerging Local Plan. It will focus new development in Ixworth where it will have ready access to its community and commercial facilities.

- 7.17 Pigeon Investment Management Limited and Persimmon Homes comment that the submitted Plan does not fully reflect the recent progress which has been made on the emerging Local Plan. In specific terms they comment about the wording used in the policy and the policy's requirement for contributions to be made towards a bridge over the A143

- 7.18 In its response to the comments from Pigeon Investment, IITPC advised that:

'Policy AP30 of the emerging Local Plan also makes reference to the provision of a bridge crossing. The evidence for this is provided by Suffolk County Council, as highway authority, to the emerging Local Plan. Policy IXW1Bb requires all residential development proposals to, '...contribute proportionately as necessary and appropriate towards key infrastructure which shall include but is not limited to...pedestrian

movement (including a pedestrian footbridge over the A143).’ This provides the appropriate level of flexibility in a policy to align with the legal requirements for securing S106.’

- 7.19 In its response to the comments from Persimmon Homes, IITPC advised that:
- ‘(it) maintains its position as outlined in paragraph 2.18. There has been a litany of planning applications brought forward by Persimmon Homes over the past decade, the majority of which have either been withdrawn for not complying with local planning policy or been refused. The extant planning consent which Persimmon Homes hold is for a right-hand ghost island junction that was granted on planning appeal following a refusal. It is disingenuous to describe this as having begun in construction terms when, two years ago, a lawful development certificate was applied for, just ahead of the consent by planning appeal was due to expire, by virtue of the positioning of three kerb stones. To date there has yet to be a masterplan prepared for the entirety of the site. Whilst this is now being prepared, we understand that it isn’t receiving endorsement from the local planning authority for a variety of reasons. Fundamentally, the Parish Council continues to have strong position concerning the access arrangements for this development which remain consistent for the last decade.’*
- 7.20 It is common ground that the initial wording of the policy needs to be revised to bring the clarity required by the NPPF, and to acknowledge that the emerging Local Plan is likely to be adopted early in the lifespan of the neighbourhood plan. I recommend a modification accordingly.
- 7.21 I sought IITPC’s comments on the extent Part B of the policy should be applied in a proportionate way. I have considered carefully its response to the clarification note. Based on all the information available, I recommend that Part B of the policy is reconfigured into two separate parts and with a proportionate element affecting the first two elements of the submitted Part B of the policy.
- 7.22 I have considered the issue of the proposed footbridge over the A143 very carefully. I have concluded that the submitted (neighbourhood) Plan prescribes an outcome which neither reflects the approach taken in the emerging Local Plan, nor is supported by any direct evidence about its commercial viability. On the former matter, Policy AP 30 of the submitted Local Plan advises that land to facilitate the delivery of a bridge across the A143 must be reserved (as part of the delivery of a wider package of green and blue infrastructure and other criteria). In addition, the inspectors of the submitted Local Plan have sought clarification on the justification for a bridge crossing the A143 (Matters, Issues and Question Q4.50). On the latter matter, it is inappropriate for a neighbourhood plan to include a requirement in an allocation which has not been properly tested, especially when those involved in the potential development of the site have questioned the viability of the proposed requirement.
- 7.23 In all the circumstances, I recommend that the reference to a pedestrian bridge over the A143 is deleted from the policy. It is a matter which IITPC may wish to review once the emerging Local Plan has been adopted, and the strategic position is clearer.
- 7.24 I also recommend a modification to the wording of Part C of the policy (as submitted) so that it uses language more appropriate to a neighbourhood plan. Otherwise, the

policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part A of the policy with:

‘New development will be focused within the settlement boundary of Ixworth Village and on allocations in any development plan document which supersedes the former St Edmundsbury area Rural Vision 2031. Development proposals within the settlement boundary or on future site allocations will be supported subject to compliance with the other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.’

Replace Part B of the policy with:

‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, residential development proposals should address the following key matters:

- **the evidence-based housing needs of the Ixworth Neighbourhood Area whilst providing either 20% or 30% Affordable Housing in conformity with policy CS5 of the adopted former St Edmundsbury area Core Strategy; and**
- **the delivery of contributions, as necessary and appropriate, towards key infrastructure which shall include but is not limited to primary healthcare, education, pedestrian movement, and community facilities, through direct provision and/or developer contributions (including Community Infrastructure Levy and/or Section 106).’**

Insert a new part of the policy (after B) to read: ‘New development should deliver high quality and well-designed buildings and, where relevant, within layouts which incorporate high quality natural landscaping which responds positively to the rural character of the parish.’

In C (as submitted) replace ‘permitted’ with ‘supported’

Policy IXW2: Meeting Ixworth’s Housing Needs

- 7.25 The supporting text advises that the Plan has been informed by the Ixworth Housing Needs Survey 2019 (prepared by Community Action Suffolk for the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan Group). The purpose of the study was to determine the level of need for housing across all tenure types in the parish.
- 7.26 The policy has three related strands as follows:
- proposals for new residential development must contribute towards Ixworth’s role as a Key Service Centre. This means addressing both the needs of the wider Housing Market Area and the needs of Ixworth parish as a rural community;
 - support will be given to dwellings that meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings under Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations and should demonstrate how the proposal contributes to increasing the choice and mix of housing available to the older population; and

- proposals for self-build or custom build plots, or proposals that make a proportion of serviced dwelling plots available for sale to self-builders or custom builders, will be supported.

- 7.27 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy has regard to Section 5 of the NPPF. It is underpinned by the Housing Needs Survey.
- 7.28 In this broader context I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that it can be applied proportionately by WSC through the development management process. Plainly larger developments will offer greater opportunities to achieve the ambition of the policy. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘Proposals for new residential development must’ with ‘As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should’

Policy IXW3: Retaining Ixworth’s Character through Residential Design

- 7.29 The Plan advises that Historic Ixworth Parish’s stock of buildings, focused close to Ixworth High Street, illustrate some of the features that give the area its character. These include a mix of styles, including some very attractive terraced housing, and use of materials such as flint, red and white brick, and black woodwork. It also comments that more modern estates have taken some limited cues from this earlier development and some, particularly the 1930s development, provided lots of public green space for play which also gives a feeling of openness. Finally, it comments that development since the 1980s has failed to replicate this, with the community saying that development feels cramped and uniform with little public open space to encourage children and adults to congregate together.
- 7.30 The policy comments that proposals for residential development are expected to reflect the character of Ixworth Parish. Where possible, it advises that this should be achieved by incorporating a series of features and principles into the overall design of development.
- 7.31 This is an important policy in the Plan. The criteria are commendably locally-distinctive. In the round, the approach taken is a very good response to Section 12 of the NPPF. In this overall context I recommend that the opening element of the policy is modified to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Its purpose remaining unaffected. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of the policy with:

‘Proposals for residential development should reflect the character of Ixworth Parish. Where practicable, this should be achieved by incorporating the following features into the overall design of development:’

Policy IXW4: Incorporating sustainable and environmentally friendly features into building design

- 7.32 The context to the policy is the Climate Change Act 2008 and the resulting decrease in carbon emissions. In terms of the UK's stock of housing, this means that new homes will have to be designed to minimise energy use and create very low net carbon emissions through their design. The Plan advises that this will include minimising heating and heat loss through effective insulation, having low water demand, and being fitted with or directly connected to renewable energy systems. In this context, the orientation of buildings can be important to make best use of available sunlight.
- 7.33 The policy comments that development proposals which includes features in its design that minimise the energy and climate impacts of new buildings and maximise the opportunities for biodiversity to thrive is encouraged. It advises that development proposals should consider the use of a series of principles/approaches. It also advises that proposals to develop renewable energy schemes are encouraged, particularly proposals that will contribute towards supplying Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe's energy needs and/or are community-owned.
- 7.34 In general terms, the policy takes a positive approach to these matters and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF. Its non-prescriptive approach also has regard to the Written Ministerial Statement Planning: Local Energy Efficiency Standards (December 2023).
- 7.35 In this overall context, I recommend modifications to the wording used in parts A, B and D of the policy. They will bring the clarity required by the NPPF without altering the thrust of the issues addressed. In specific terms they acknowledge that the word 'encouraged' has little weight in planning policy terms. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the opening element of Part A of the policy with:

'Wherever practicable, development proposals should include features in their design that minimise the energy and climate impacts of new buildings and maximise the opportunities for biodiversity to thrive. In particular, development proposals should consider the following matters:'

In Part B replace 'are encouraged' with 'will be supported'

Replace Part D with:

'Wherever practicable, major new residential developments should provide defined growing spaces in communal areas that will contribute towards health and well-being appropriate to the scale of development and to enhance local food growing networks.'

Policy IXW5: Re-Provision of Ixworth's Village Hall

- 7.36 The Plan advises that since 1932, the residents of Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe have had the benefit of a village hall that has been provided on its current site in land and buildings left in trust to the residents of the village. In 1990, the hall was renovated and extended in a programme financed by the Parish Council. Over the past decade, the facilities have dilapidated to an extent where they are no longer considered suitable to meet the needs of the community as new development emerges within the village. As such, the Plan advises that there is a fundamental need to provide a new village hall/community centre facility in a location to be determined following appropriate feasibility studies. The Plan advises that a proposal to build a new library adjacent to the existing hall did not meet with universal approval locally during the consultations that were held in 2017. In addition, it proved to be an expensive option and could have resulted in the reduction of green space for additional car parking.
- 7.37 There are four related strands to the policy as follows:
- the re-provision of Ixworth Village Hall within the settlement boundary or on any site adjacent to the settlement boundary that is allocated through another development plan document will be supported, subject to a series of criteria;
 - a new Village Hall will be expected to retain library provision at least equivalent to the existing provision. The replacement library provision may need to support enhancement of the library service because of growth in the neighbourhood area and its surrounding area. Development will be expected to make appropriate contributions towards expanded library provision;
 - if a new Village Hall is provided in Ixworth Village, the re-use of the existing facility for activities which enhance the function of Ixworth Village Centre will be strongly supported; and
 - in recognition of its value in supporting the vitality of the shops and services in Ixworth Village centre, the car park serving the existing Village Hall (along with the existing access onto the High Street) must be retained for public use unless it can clearly be demonstrated that an alternative use will not harm the vitality of the Village Centre
- 7.38 This is an interesting policy. In addition, it presents opportunities and challenges in equal measure. In terms of the former, the policy provides a mechanism to deliver a new village hall/community centre facility elsewhere in the village. In terms of the latter, there is considerable uncertainty about its location and the facilities to be accommodated in the new hall. In effect it is an evolving project for which a policy has been prepared.
- 7.39 A further challenge is that the policy is general in its effect, and Part A is criteria based. This is an appropriate approach and will provide the necessary flexibility throughout the Plan period. However, paragraph 6.4 of the Plan advises that the emerging Local Plan allocates a site at The Langridge (AP29) for a range of uses including community uses. It also comments that work to support the Neighbourhood Plan has been focused on the design of the building to include a library facility. It also advises that if the proposed site allocation in the emerging Local Plan is brought forward for

development, then the required community uses could include a new village hall. At this stage there is insufficient information in the Plan for me to conclude that the development of this site will incorporate a replacement village hall. On this basis, I will approach the policy in a general way, and in the anticipation that it will provide a context within which IITPC can consider potential alternative locations for a replacement village hall.

- 7.40 I sought IITPC's views on the practicability of criterion e in Part A of the policy (Safe access is provided to the High Street for pedestrians, cyclists, and disabled users). In its response to the clarification note, it advised that:

'The village hall is one of the most important and well-used community facilities in Ixworth. Ixworth village itself is relatively compact in its geography and therefore offers an excellent opportunity to increase cycling and walking for journeys within the village. If a new village hall were to be delivered in a location which was unable to secure safe access to the High Street by non-vehicular users, this would not represent a sustainable outcome. It is accepted that a scheme on the edge of the village is highly unlikely to be able to provide access directly to the High Street; rather the intention of criterion e. is for any such development to ensure that it can provide safe links to routes that themselves provide good access to the High Street. Examples of such routes would be the identified walking and cycling routes or quiet residential streets that then provide a linkage to the High Street.'

- 7.41 I also sought IITPC's views on the extent of the discussions which have taken place with the County Council on the delivery of future library facilities (Part B). In its response to the clarification note, it advised that

'Suffolk County Council was not approached by the Parish Council because the lease relating to the facilities to be located there is between the Jiggins Trust and Suffolk County Council. The Jiggins Trust has given the Parish Council to understand that, were there to be a new Village Hall, Suffolk Libraries would wish to be located in part of that Hall and the Trust would liaise with Suffolk County Council accordingly, as referred to in paragraph 6.4 of the Neighbourhood Plan.'

- 7.42 I also raised with IITPC the lack of clarity in the policy's requirement that replacement library provision may need to support enhancement of the library service because of growth in the Neighbourhood Plan area and its surrounding area. In its response to the clarification note, IITPC commented that:

'It is acknowledged that the wording could be clearer. However, the point is that it cannot be known when over the plan period a planning application to deliver a new village hall may come forward. Therefore it cannot be known what the requirements of the library service will be at that time. It would be expected that the applicant would engage with the Library Service at the earliest stage of assembling a planning application in order to understand the needs. This would then inform provision. It is suggested that, in order to provide the necessary clarity, such an explanation is made in the supporting text.'

- 7.43 A representation was received from the Jiggins Memorial Hall and Playing Field Trust. It is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and owns and runs Ixworth Village Hall and playing field. It advises that:

‘the (Plan) is now inconsistent with the (emerging Local Plan). However, the (Plan) could be improved and made consistent with the (emerging Local Plan) were an additional clause or clauses to be added to Policy IXW5. Such clauses would mirror the comments in the Local Plan in identifying a part of the Langridge site to the northeast end of the site adjacent to the Bardwell Rd as a suitable site for a new village hall and retail facility. This area is currently occupied by redundant old agricultural buildings.’

- 7.44 I have considered the policy and the various comments carefully. It is an ambitious policy which has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF. I have noted the comments from the Trust. However, I do not consider that they need to be incorporated into the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.
- 7.45 In this context I recommend a package of modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF and to allow WSC to implement it through the development management process:
- the deletion of the unnecessary first criterion in Part A (on need and viability);
 - the recasting of Parts B and C;
 - the inclusion of additional commentary in the supporting text about the general approach taken; and
 - revisions to the wording of the supporting text to acknowledge comments made by the Jiggins Trust on paragraph 6.4.
- 7.46 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In Part A delete criterion a

Replace B with: ‘Wherever practicable, the new Village Hall should incorporate a library at least equivalent to the provision in the existing village hall and should make provision for an enhanced library service to reflect the planned growth in the neighbourhood area.’

Replace C with: ‘Should a new Village Hall be provided in Ixworth Village, the re-use of the existing facility for activities which enhance the function of Ixworth Village Centre will be supported. Office, retail, and community uses (provided they are complementary to the facilities offered at the new Village Hall) and employment/meeting space will be particularly supported.’

In D replace ‘must’ with ‘should’

Replace the first sentence of paragraph 6.4 with: ‘The Jiggins Memorial Hall and Playing Field Trust is a charitable incorporated organisation and owns and runs Ixworth Village Hall and playing field. It is seeking a site for an expanded village hall.’

At the end of paragraph 6.4 add: 'At this point there is a lack of clarity about the location for the new hall and the facilities to be accommodated. In effect it is an evolving project for which Policy IXW5 has been prepared. In this context the approach in the policy is general rather than site-specific. This will provide flexibility for all concerned to assemble an appropriate package of measures. It will also future proof the Plan by avoiding any specific reference to any site.'

Policy IXW6: Ixworth Village Centre

- 7.47 The Plan advises that the centre of Ixworth Village has always played a central role in community life. The primary focus has traditionally been built around its retail services which, in turn, has created a hub for community life, with the High Street acting as a natural venue for residents to meet.
- 7.48 The policy advises that to secure the ongoing vitality of Ixworth Village, proposals which protect, enhance, and promote a diverse range of appropriate uses – including retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community - will be supported
- 7.49 Pigeon Investment comments that:
- Draft allocation Land at Bardwell Road Ixworth (AP29) of the emerging Local Plan proposes a mixed-use scheme including new retail provision on land beyond the current village centre which is not proposed to be amended. The NP as drafted would fail to contribute to achieving sustainable development as criteria B would conflict with an emerging Local Plan which is at an advanced stage of preparation and to which limited representations have been received on the relevant policy.*
- 7.50 I recommend that Part B of the policy is amended accordingly. This will ensure that the development plan takes a consistent approach.
- 7.51 Parts C, D and E take a positive approach towards temporary uses. However, I recommend that Parts C and D are combined into a single part of the policy and that Part E is relocated into the supporting text. I also recommend that the policy acknowledges that some temporary uses may be permitted development.
- 7.52 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part B b) with: 'Provision is made within the settlement boundary or site allocations in or any development plan document which supersedes the former St Edmundsbury area Rural Vision 2021 and in a location that is easily accessible to the existing community and the identified site allocation, particularly on foot and by bicycle.'

Replace Part C with: 'Insofar as planning permission is required, the use of Class E premises for temporary uses will be supported in Ixworth Village Centre. Such uses include 'pop up' shops and cultural, creative and leisure uses introduced on a temporary basis or for specific events. Any such temporary uses should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential uses, particularly through noise and pollution.'

Delete Part D and E.

After the second sentence in 6.13 add: 'In general terms temporary uses will not be considered appropriate if their operation requires a large number of vehicle parking spaces unless sufficient parking arrangements are incorporated within the proposal.'

Policy IXW7: Leisure and Sporting Facilities

- 7.53 The Plan comments that to provide for the increased need for leisure provision to support the growing population of Ixworth Parish, development proposals that deliver Children's 'active' play facilities and youth facilities will be strongly supported. It also advises that the delivery of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities will be secured through Section 106 contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy funding.
- 7.54 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and Ixworth's growing population, and has regard to Section 8 of the NPPF. However, I recommend that part B of the policy is repositioned into the supporting text. It explains how the policy will be implemented rather than being a land use policy.
- 7.55 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Delete Part B of the policy

Reposition the deleted part of the policy to the end of paragraph 6.14

Policy IXW8: Walking and Cycling

- 7.56 The Plan advises that the ambition of this policy is to positively influence future patterns of movement into and around Ixworth Village. As such the Plan seeks to focus on making improvements for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage more walking. It also advises that linking the new housing allocations, as well as the existing parts of the Village, into a network of safe walking and cycling routes is vital to encourage more walking/cycling and less use of the car.
- 7.57 It is a comprehensive policy. At its heart the first part advises that as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals will be expected to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement and be in accordance with the Suffolk Design Streets Guide 2022 (or any successor document).
- 7.58 In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to walking and cycling and has regard to Sections 8 and 9 of the NPPF.
- 7.59 Both Persimmon Homes and Pigeon Investments comment on the policy. In both cases their comments focus on Part D of the policy. Persimmon Homes comments that '(it) acknowledges that this infrastructure (a pedestrian bridge over the A143) would be strongly supported by the Parish Council, although evidence has not been provided about wider support for a footbridge nor for the need for a crossing' Pigeon Investment comments that still does not reflect RV12 allocation wording and retains reference to a footbridge.
- 7.60 I have considered these comments carefully. However, the policy does not require the development of a footbridge and simply comments that one would be strongly

supported. As such there is no direct conflict with the relevant policies in the emerging Local Plan. Nevertheless, the supporting text does not reflect the most up to date position in relation to the policy approach in the emerging Local Plan. I recommend modifications to the relevant sections of the supporting text to remedy this issue and to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. This will also ensure that the approach taken in this policy is consistent with the recommended modifications to Policy IXW1.

7.61 In terms of the more general elements of the policy I recommend the following modifications to bring the clarity required by the NPPF:

- in Part A, a detailed revision to the wording used;
- in Part B of the policy the deletion of the final sentence. It is the opposite of the positive policy and is already addressed in the supporting text;
- a recasting of the wording used in Part F; and
- the repositioning of the second element of Part F into a separate Part G.

7.62 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

In Part A replace ‘will be expected to’ with ‘should’

In Part B delete the final sentence

Replace Part F with: ‘Development proposals should protect and, as appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, enhance the existing Public Rights of Way network where this would improve walking routes from the development site. Wherever practicable these routes should connect to the Public Rights of Way network.’

Add a new Part (G) to read: ‘Development proposals should also seek opportunities to link to green spaces and, where appropriate, contribute towards their improvement.’

Replace paragraphs 7.9 and 7.10 with:

‘A partnership between the Parish Council and Suffolk County Council has been exploring various options for the delivery of a footbridge that would connect the two ends of Crown Lane. This bridge seeks to provide cycle access and considers access for wildlife.

Policy AP 30 of the submitted Local Plan advises that land to facilitate the delivery of a bridge across the A143 must be reserved (as part of the delivery of a wider package of green and blue infrastructure and other criteria). In addition, the inspectors of the submitted Local Plan have sought clarification on the justification for a bridge crossing the A143 (Matters, Issues and Question Q4.50). In all the circumstances this is a matter which the Parish Council will review once the emerging Local Plan has been adopted, and the strategic position is clearer. It could form part of any wider review of a made neighbourhood Plan.’

Policy IXW9: Vehicular Parking

- 7.63 The policy comments that parking should be provided referring to standards set in the Suffolk County Council Guidance for Parking 2023 (or any successor document). Any on-street parking should be well integrated into the development layout and street-scene to avoid obstruction to all users, paying particular care to the safety and movement of pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.64 I sought IITPC's comments on the extent to which the policy brought any added value beyond the existing local approach to car parking. In its response it advised that:
- '(it) is acknowledged that planning applications are already required to refer to the parking guidance provided by the 2023 Suffolk County Council document. However, this is guidance rather than policy. The intention of Policy IXW9 is to specifically identify the issue of most significance to the community of Ixworth and signpost to development that proposals should consider in particular the design of on-street parking. This reflects the experience of recent development in Ixworth which, despite being subject to the same guidance, has delivered poorly designed layouts with on-street parking creating a hostile and unsafe environment for pedestrians, particularly children.'*
- 7.65 On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the policy is appropriate and brings added local value to the County Council's parking standards. Nevertheless, I recommend that the element of the policy which refers to on-street parking is deleted. This acknowledges that the planning process cannot control on-street car parking. I also recommend that the remaining element of Part A is modified so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part A of the policy with: 'Development proposals should provide car parking spaces Parking to the standards set out in the Suffolk County Council Guidance for Parking 2023 (or any successor document).'

Policy IXW10: Local Green Spaces

- 7.66 This policy proposes the designation of eight Local Green Spaces (LGS). Details of how each area fulfils the Local Green Space criteria are included in the supporting evidence base. I looked at the LGSs during the visit. The importance of the Recreation Ground was self-evident. Elsewhere the LGSs were mainly open spaces in residential areas.
- 7.67 I am satisfied that the proposed LGSs meet the criteria in paragraphs 105b and 106 of the NPPF.
- 7.68 The policy itself goes beyond the matter-of-fact approach in paragraph 107 of the NPPF. I recommend a modification to remedy this matter. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part B with ‘Development proposals within the defined Local Green Spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances.’

Policy IXW11: Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 7.69 The Plan comments about the significant infrastructure investment on drainage in the parish. It also highlights the importance of ensuring that new development provides effective sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) to mitigate surface water risk, to ensure surface water quality and benefit biodiversity and amenity value, whilst allowing residents to be closer to nature and green infrastructure.
- 7.70 In general terms, the policy takes a positive approach to this matter and has regard to Section 14 of the NPPF.
- 7.71 In this broad context I recommend that Part B is recast so that it is more explicit in its commentary about the way in which proposed SuDS should be designed so they can enhance wildlife and biodiversity. I also recommend that Part C is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text. This acknowledges that it describes how the policy will be implemented rather than being a land use policy. In recommending these modifications I have considered IIPPC’s helpful responses to the clarification note.
- 7.72 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace Part B with: ‘Wherever practicable, development proposed SuDS should be designed so they can enhance wildlife and biodiversity.’

Delete Part C

Reposition part C of the policy to the end of paragraph 8.7.

Non-policy Actions

- 7.73 The Plan includes a series of non-policy Actions. They have arisen naturally as the Plan was prepared. I am satisfied that they are both appropriate and locally-distinctive.
- 7.74 The Actions are set out in a separate part of the Plan (Section 9). This is best practice.
- 7.75 I am satisfied that the Actions are both appropriate to the parish and locally-distinctive. The Actions on the High Street, Traffic Management, Supporting Ecology and a Healthy Ixworth are particularly noteworthy.

Monitoring and Review

- 7.76 Paragraph 1.14 comment about these matters to good effect. Nevertheless, the adoption of the West Suffolk Local Plan is likely to take place early in the life of any made neighbourhood plan. As such, I recommend that IITPC considers the need for a review of the Plan within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan.

At the end of paragraph 1.14 add: ‘The adoption of the West Suffolk Local Plan is likely to take place early in the life of any made neighbourhood plan. As such the Parish Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan – Examiner’s Report

Council will consider the need or otherwise for a review of the Plan within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan.'

Other Matters – General

- 7.77 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly because of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan because of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters. It will be appropriate for WSC and IITPC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies and to accommodate any administrative and technical changes.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2040. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to West Suffolk Council that, subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report, the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved on 20 July 2017.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner. The responses from the Parish Council to the clarification note were both detailed and informative, and West Suffolk Council managed the overall process in a very efficient manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
13 January 2025