

## **Withersfield Parish 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.

The presentation of the Plan is good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. In addition, the Plan makes good use of various high-quality maps, photographs, and other related information.

#### ***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:

##### ***Policy WITH1***

In principle the policy provides a good spatial strategy for the neighbourhood area and properly seeks to focus new development within the Housing Settlement Boundary.

However as submitted the use of the word 'may' brings an element of uncertainty to the policy's approach. Should 'may' read 'will' given the inbuilt safeguards in the policy?

##### ***Policy WITH2***

I looked carefully at the proposed Buildings of Local Importance during the visit.

The policy is a good local interpretation of paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

##### ***Policy WITH3***

This is another good policy. The proposed designation of the Local Green Spaces (LGSs) is underpinned by the details in Appendix A.

In part C of the policy is the final sentence intended to apply generally or only to development proposals within the proposed LGSs?

##### ***Policy WITH4***

I looked carefully at the proposed Landscape Buffer during the visit. I saw its relationship to the northern edge of Haverhill.

I note that the supporting text identifies that the approach taken is a spatial policy rather than one which relates to landscape character. As such is the title of 'Landscape Buffer' appropriate and/or correct?

I note that the supporting text refers to former development plan documents rather than to the recently adopted Local Plan. In this context, does the policy have regard to strategic policies in the current development plan?

Furthermore:

- what has caused the Parish Council to want to define a precise area for the proposed landscape buffer (paragraph 4.18)?
- given the distance between the northern edge of Haverhill and Withersfield, and the policies in the adopted development plan, is there any realistic risk of coalescence taking place between the two settlements?
- could the objectives of the policy be achieved without spatially defining a buffer?

#### *Policy WITH5*

In general terms the policy takes a positive approach towards safeguarding dark skies.

I am minded to recommend that the second bullet point is repositioned into the supporting text as the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance is not directly a development plan (or land use) policy. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

#### **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:

- Jaynic Limited;
- Pigeon (and the landowners); and
- Suffolk Council (the two separate representations).

West Suffolk Council suggests a series of refinements to paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of 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 24 November 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 West Suffolk Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy concerned.

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Independent Examiner

Withersfield Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan

3 November 2025