

South Newnham 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 relationship between the Vision, the topics of concern and the policies is helpfully captured in Figure 8.

The presentation of the Plan is very good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The maps are of a high-quality.

The Plan is underpinned by detailed appendices. The Local Green Space Assessment (Appendix C) and the Views across Open Green Spaces (Appendix D) are particularly important. This approach is best practice and provides assurance to all concerned that the Plan is supported by appropriate information and evidence.

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 Neighbourhood Forum.

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:

Community Engagement

The Consultation Statement is very comprehensive.

The representation from Queens' College, Cambridge comments that the Forum has failed to engage with the College. I would appreciate the Forum's observations on this representation.

Policy SNNP1

As submitted, the policy sets out the details to be included with planning applications and defers to Policy 69 in the Local Plan. In this context, I am minded to recommend that the policy is recast so that it sets out the specific areas to which the Local Plan policy will apply and the associated information requirements.

Does the Forum have any comments on this proposition?

Given the recent grant of planning permission on appeal, is it appropriate for the Owlstone Croft Gardens (1c) to be identified within the Green River Corridor for the purposes of this policy?

Policy SNNP2

This policy repeats national planning policy and the Environment Act. Has its purpose now been overtaken by recent events and legislation?

Policy SNNP3

The policy comments in several places about the need for lighting. How would the City Council be able to determine need and does such an approach have the clarity required by the NPPF?

What is meant by ‘the edge of Cambridge’ in the second part of the policy?

Policy SNNP4

The approach taken towards the designation of local green spaces is underpinned by the details in Appendix C (based on an assessment of each space against paragraph 106 of the NPPF).

However, has the Forum considered the additional local benefits of the proposed designations beyond the protection already provided by their locations (where relevant) in a conservation area (Planning practice guidance ID:37-011-20140306)?

The proposed designation of the Skaters’ Meadow footpath (LGS2) has attracted a significant degree of commentary. Appendix C indicates that the verges and trees are vulnerable, risk being damaged, and that designation as a local green space will help protect it and will facilitate re-wilding of the verges to retain its biodiversity and wildlife. In this context, has the Forum proposed the local green space to enhance the footpath rather than based on its current performance against the three criteria in paragraph 106 of the NPPF?

Policy SNNP5

In general, the first part of the policy reflects the network in the neighbourhood area. However, is ‘insensitive resurfacing’ a land use matter which can be controlled by a planning policy?

Policy SNNP6

Is the second part of the policy intended to apply only to the retail facilities identified in the schedule of community facilities identified in 7.4.1 of the Plan?

If not, is it appropriate for the Plan to apply a very general approach towards the protection of retail units when the approach taken in the Local Plan is more targeted to defined areas?

Policy SNNP8

This is a good policy which is underpinned by the details in Appendix A. It is a very good local interpretation of national planning policy on non-designated heritage assets.

Policy SNNP10

The City Council questions the extent to which the policy brings any added value to national and local planning policies on climate change and the risk of flooding. Does the Forum wish to expand about the reasoning for including this policy in the Plan beyond the information contained in paragraph 7.7.7 of the Plan?

Policy SNNP11

This is a good, locally-distinctive policy. Principle g) reads in a very matter-of-fact way. I have noted the detailed work undertaken on Character Areas. Is this element of the policy appropriate for the whole neighbourhood area, or should it apply within certain character areas?

Policy SNNP12

Does this policy bring any added value beyond the relevant policies in the Local Plan?

Policy SNNP13

The policy relies heavily on the definition of a family. It would be helpful if the Forum expanded on the reasoning for the policy and the extent to which it could be made more general rather than applying specifically to families.

Policy SNNP14

Does the second sentence relate to boundaries associated with development sites?

Policy SNNP15

This is a good policy which is underpinned by the details in Appendix D.

Community Actions

The various Actions address a series of important local issues and, in several cases, complement the land use policies in the Plan.

Representations

Does the Neighbourhood Forum wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

It would be helpful if the Neighbourhood Forum responded to the representations from Queens' College Cambridge, and Cambridgeshire County Council.

The City Council proposes a series of revisions to the Plan. It would be helpful if the Neighbourhood Forum commented on the suggested revisions.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 22 August 2024. 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 City 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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24 July 2024