

## Southwold Neighbourhood Development Plan

### Examination Arrangements

To: Lesley Beevor, Clerk, Southwold Town Council and Ruth Bishop, Senior Planner (Policy and Delivery), East Suffolk Council.

Dear Both,

This Note sets out the basis on which the examination of the Southwold Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken. Its ambitions are two-fold:

- to comply with the CLG/NPIERS Guidance for service users and examiners (April 2018); and
- to provide guidance for the Town Council on the key stages of the process.

#### ***The examination route map***

Different examinations raise their own issues. Nevertheless, the following are the key components that will be applied to this examination:

##### *Stage 1: Background Reading*

This involves reading the submitted Plan, its supporting documents and the various representations.

I will complete this stage over the next few days. I will take the representations into account throughout the examination.

##### *Stage 2: Visit to the neighbourhood area*

The visit will provide me with an opportunity to look at specific issues and sites in the neighbourhood area. Plainly not every component of the Plan needs to be viewed on the visit. Nevertheless, I will focus my time on looking at the issues that have arisen either from the background reading or which are fundamental to the Plan.

The visit will be unaccompanied. I will not meet with representatives of the Town Council, East Suffolk Council or any of the parties who have commented on the Plan. To do so would have the potential to affect the independence of the examination process.

I will visit the neighbourhood area next week.

##### *Stage 3: Clarification Note*

I will issue a clarification note after the visit. It will raise a series of questions on the Plan in general and its policies in particular. The answers to these questions will help me to understand the Plan better and, where appropriate, to recommend modifications to ensure it meets the basic conditions.

The clarification note will suggest a timescale for responses based on the issues it addresses. It is usually between two and three weeks. However, this is a matter which I am happy should proceed at whatever pace is determined locally. This recognises that neighbourhood plans are traditionally prepared by local councils and individuals on a voluntary basis.

##### *Stage 4: Decision about the need for a hearing*

The combination of the background reading, the unaccompanied visit and the responses to the clarification note will allow me to come to a view about the need or otherwise for a hearing.

The legislation anticipates that the vast majority of examinations can proceed by way of written representations and without a hearing.

If a hearing is required, I will make separate arrangements with East Suffolk Council and the Town Council.

#### *Stage 5: The Examination Report*

My report will be prepared throughout the examination period. Its general parts can be written early in the process. The elements of the report that overlap with the clarification note will not be prepared until the responses to the note are received.

I will prepare a fact check report before the final report. This gives an opportunity for the two councils to comment on any factual inaccuracies and/or omissions. It will not present an opportunity for a further phase of the examination.

#### ***Other related matters***

##### *The timescale for the examination*

Different plans cover different issues. Neighbourhood plan examinations are directly affected by the scope of their policies and the number and/or complexity of the representations received.

In the case of the Southwold Plan, I anticipate being able to prepare the fact check report in early October 2021. Plainly this will depend on the timeliness of the Town Council's response to the clarification note.

##### *Documents*

The East Suffolk Council website already displays the submitted Plan documents. Please will the Council display this and other documents which will arise during the examination.

##### *Contact arrangements*

My principal contact throughout the examination will be Ruth Bishop. In most cases I will ask Ruth to send documents to the Town Council on my behalf.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Southwold Neighbourhood Development Plan

19 August 2021