

South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan Examination

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Dear Mr Banham

SOUTH NORFOLK VILLAGE CLUSTERS HOUSING ALLOCATIONS PLAN EXAMINATION

As you are aware, I have been appointed to examine the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (the SNVCP or the plan) and have commenced initial preparation. Thank you for supplying hard copies of various documents, I shall make requests for any further documents through the programme officer.

I am seeking to clarify some initial points at the earliest opportunity to aid understanding. Please advise if any of my assumptions are wrong. It may be you simply need to refer me to an existing document that I have not seen so far. The intention is to help inform the matters, issues and questions document (the MIQs) which will be prepared in the lead up to the hearing sessions.

1. The role of the subsidiary SNVCP is to fulfil the task set by Policy 7.4 of the overarching and strategic Greater Norwich Local Plan (the GNLP), namely to allocate sites for a minimum of 1,200 homes in the village clusters of the District. Policy 1 of the GNLP makes clear that the village clusters exclude the Norwich urban area, insofar as this extends into the district, the main towns of Wymondham, Diss (with part of Roydon), Harleston and Long Stratton, and the key service centres of Hethersett, Hingham, Loddon/Chedgrave and Poringland/Framlingham Earl. Please confirm.
2. I take it that the submitted plan for examination (document A.1.1) comprises the January 2023 publication plan as amended by the July 2024 pre-submission addendum. It thus effectively supercedes and replaces the two previous documents. The representations made during the two Regulation 19 consultation periods should thus be combined and treated as one for the purposes of the examination.
3. The approach of the Council, reflected in the GNLP, is to consider 'clusters' of villages as opposed to a traditional hierarchy of large villages/small villages/hamlets. 48 have been identified. Are these simply based on primary school catchment areas (of 48 schools presumably?) or are other factors taken into account? Is there a document that explains how the clusters have been arrived at?
4. Paragraphs 14-17 in topic paper B.11.1 describe an audit of services and facilities in addition to primary schools and suggests that some clusters are more 'sustainable' than others. Have the results of this audit been published, and has this influenced the allocation of sites *between* different clusters?

5. In relation to allocating sites *within* clusters, I take it the assessment criteria are those set out in B.1.48 and the individual site by site discussion is set out in the site assessments B.1.1-B.1.47. Please confirm.
6. It is noted that the plan allocates 58 sites in 33 of the clusters, so 15 clusters have no allocations.
7. It is understood that the starting point for the settlement limits is those in the 2015 plan. Are there any proposals to remove settlement limits from any village or hamlet, and is the new settlement limit west of Mill Lane, Seething, the only addition?
8. Were there any Regulation 19 representations that any further villages or hamlets should have defined settlement limits? If so please list.
9. Are there a series of published criteria for determining settlement limits?
10. SNVCP Appendix B lists the proposed changes to the settlement limits from those in the 2015 plan. It would appear 11 of these would potentially facilitate small developments, the remainder are updated boundaries to reflect recent development on the ground. Is this correct?

Please respond to the above points as soon as you are able.

In addition to general discussion regarding the preparation of the plan and the methodology for selecting sites, it seems clear that the hearings will focus on the various sites selected and their individual merits. In order to fully appreciate the issues and lead the discussion, it will be necessary for me to carry out a site visit for most if not all of the sites prior to the hearings. Given their number/wide distribution and some other commitments this will take some time. In addition, following the publication of the MIQs, it will be necessary to give participants (and the Council) the opportunity to prepare hearing statements, and for these to be published for information before the hearings commence. This is particularly important given the length of time since many of the Regulation 19 representations were made.

My proposed timetable for the next stages of the examination is thus as follows:

Council respond to this letter and initial preparation by Inspector - September
MIQs and guidance for participants published - mid-October
Deadline for statements on MIQs and confirmation of appearances - end November
Publication of hearing programme and statements - mid December
Hearings: alternate weeks commencing January 12, 26 and if a third week is necessary, February 9. Sitting Tuesday-Thursday with Fridays as reserve days.

In order to maintain transparency and assist other participants, please place a copy of this letter and your response(s) on the examination website.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

David Reed

INSPECTOR