

Response of the Qualifying Body (Hingham Town Council) – July 2025

Hingham Neighbourhood Development Plan – Proposed Modifications to Policy HING9

Examiner's Clarification Note

This Note sets out my initial comments on the proposed modifications to Policy HING9 of the Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. Matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

Initial Comments

The proposed modifications to Policy HING9 are helpfully underpinned by the various technical studies.

Points for Clarification

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area for a second time. I am now able to raise issues for clarification with the Town 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 changes that may be necessary to the proposed modifications to Policy HING9 to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

The proposed modified policy

I note the relationship between the first three criteria in the policy and revised paragraphs 8.24 and 8.25 of the supporting text. Is there any update on the position as described in paragraph 8.25?

Response of the QB:

The Town Council has maintained a dialogue with the Diocese (both in February 2025 and more recently). The Diocese continue to indicate that they are still open to the Town Council pursuing purchase of the land - they are wanting to the Town Council to make a firm commitment. The Town Council are also wanting to make such a firm commitment to secure the land - but of course the purchase of land with public money needs to be with a confidence that the land will be brought into use as per the vision within the Neighbourhood Plan. The Diocese have indicated they are planning to dispose of the former Rectory at some point (probably later this year), hence are pushing the TC to make an offer on the land, which requires some certainty around the potential to develop the site as set out in draft Policy HING1.

The policy comments about a mix of community use and that development on the site will be brought forward using a master-planning approach co-ordinated by Hingham Town Council. In this context does the Town Council have any further information about the extent to which the proposed package of uses on the site would be developed at the same time, or, if not, the order in which the uses listed in the policy would be brought forward should the Plan be made and planning permission be granted?

Response of the QB:

The priority would be to deliver the car park first. The Town Council are committed to trying to give Hingham a plan for the provision of the community facilities it will need for the future to support the planned levels of new growth, as well as addressing the immediate need for parking provision. The concerns regarding the current 'on highway' parking congestion are only increasing and complaints regarding parking issues continue.

Unfortunately, the registered village greens (at the Fairlands) are still having to be temporarily utilised for parking provision for weddings/funerals/events at the church and overspill parking for the nearby Lincoln Hall. This cannot be a formal solution to these issues due to the legal protection given to registered village greens and therefore the need to find a solution becomes more pressing. The Town Council's priority is to work to providing a safe purpose-built car parking area to serve the town centre including St Andrews Church. We are committed to supporting our community and making Hingham a thriving town.

The Town Council's representation

The Town Council's representation on the proposed modifications to the policy comments that 'the provision of a car park would work in conjunction with parking restrictions (including timed parking and accessible parking) within the town centre, therefore reducing parking congestion and making for a safer highway environment.'

Are proposals for parking restrictions in the town centre currently being considered or programmed for consideration?

Response of the QB:

The issue of parking in the town centre been a Town Council priority for a considerable time and the issue was the most mentioned during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan which began in 2022. The Town Council has spent considerable time and money in pursuit of solutions to the problems highlighted by local residents. The Town Council commissioned Norfolk County Council to undertake a feasibility study under the Norfolk County Council (NCC) Parish Partnership funding programme. Funding was awarded in 2020, although the study was not received by the Town Council until September 2023.

<https://hinghamtowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Feasibility-Study-Hingham-Fairlands-Market-Place-Safety-Improvements.pdf>

The Town Council set up a highways working party, and met with the Highway Safety Officers at NCC to discuss their findings. Those NCC Officers advised the Town Council to consider the options within the feasibility study and come back to them with what it thought would be acceptable to the community. The Highways Working party undertook a survey of all households and businesses to gather data/opinions to inform this.

After some discussion the working party decided to pursue NCC for some "easy wins". These included:

- double yellow lines at junctions where continuous illegal and dangerous parking occurs*
- double yellow lines at other pinch points in the town centre where parking causes obstruction e.g. larger vehicles cannot access the road safely (the refuse lorry in particular has real issues)*

- provision of marked accessible parking bays in the Market Place- (there is no current provision for these).

The working party are currently finalising their proposal to take back to NCC to further the discussion. However there is some clarity around where these preferred measures are likely to be and these are based on safety concerns raised by the public and in the study, particularly the Dereham Road junction with B1108 Fairland Crossroads; some larger scale parking restrictions (which would generally improve the pedestrian environment) and some timed parking within the town centre to improve access to businesses for short term visitors – e.g. dropping in to the bakery or newsagents for example. These will need to be paired with the provision of off road car parking for the displaced cars. Some outlying residential streets are already subject to on street car parking where non-residents are parking cars and leaving them all day (e.g. Chapel Street behind the Market Place). Whilst no parking restrictions have yet been programmed in, there is a commitment from the NCC in respect of this feasibility study to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Please see Appendix A for email from NNC officer in respect of the NCC Feasibility study – relevant section is highlighted.

Representations

Does the Town Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

Response of the QB:

We will respond on this matter in due course

Appendix A: Email from NCC in respect of NCC Feasibility Study

Sent: Monday, October 2, 2023 5:07:45 PM

Subject: RE: Hingham Road, Fairland Crossroads Feasibility Study

Hi Alison,

Well spotted!

We decided to take out the utility appendix as it added tens of sheets. Unfortunately, this was not actioned correct across the whole document

We will get this correctly updated and will share with you. We have the utility info and can use for the basis of early design if we are able to progress.

We would like the Town Council to confirm if they support or do not support options or elements of options.

1. Fairlands junction
2. Town Centre Zebra Crossing
3. Traffic Regulation orders (TRO). i.e yellow lines

It would be useful to understand the relevant priority of the TRO locations.

The TRO's are the lowest cost item so potentially the most likely to be delivered in the short to long term, subject to a successful legal process and securing funding.

If any of these are likely to be contentious in the Town, then it might be worth split into different packages, so an objection to one does not hold them all up.

No funding stream has currently been identified for the implementation of any proposals although Norfolk Council Officers are continuing to look for funding opportunities.

If funding is identified any improvement scheme would likely have to compete against other similar requests within the county.

Kind Regards

Kevin Townly, IEng RegASM (IHE) FIHIE,
Asset, Programme & Funding Manager
Highways, Transport & Waste, Community & Environment Services

