

# INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE SAWTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT

John Potter  
Sawtry Parish Council

Frances Schulz  
Huntingdonshire District Council

Examination Ref 01/DH/SNP

Via email:

8 June 2023

Dear Mr Potter and Ms Schulz

## THE SAWTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (SVNP) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of preliminary questions for Sawtry Parish Council (SPC) as Qualifying Body, one for Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and three questions to which I require a joint response from both Councils. These are attached as an Annex to this letter, and I would like to receive the responses by **Wednesday 5 July 2023**.

### 1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I have received a complete submission of the Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement (March 2023), the Consultation Statement (March 2023), the HRA Screening Request (March 2023), the SEA Screening Request (March 2023) and the Regulation 16 representations. I am satisfied that I have enough relevant evidence to enable me to commence the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the SVNP, I have not identified any very significant flaws that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

### 2. Site Visit

I intend to undertake a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area in the week commencing 19 June 2023. This will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The site visit will be undertaken unaccompanied. It is very important that I am not approached to discuss any aspects of the Plan or the neighbourhood area, as this may be perceived to prejudice my independence and risk compromising the fairness of the examination process.

I may have some additional questions, following my site visit, which I will set out in writing should I require any further clarification.

### 3. Written Representations

At this stage, I consider the examination can be conducted solely by the written representations procedure, without the need for a hearing. However, I will reserve the option to

convene a hearing should a matter(s) come to light where I consider that a hearing is necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

#### 4. Further Clarification

I have a number of initial questions seeking further information and clarification from both SPC and HDC. I have set these questions out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if a written response could be provided by **Wednesday 5 July 2023**.

#### 5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the SVNP (including conduct of the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within 4-6 weeks of submission of the draft Plan. However, I have raised a number of questions to which I must provide the opportunity for the preparation of a full and considered response. Consequently, the examination timetable will be extended but please be assured that I will seek to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPE office team will seek to keep you updated on the anticipated delivery date of the draft report.

If you have any questions related to the conduct of the examination, which you would like me to address, please do not hesitate to contact the office team in the first instance.

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure a copy of this letter and any subsequent responses, are placed on the websites of the Parish Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

*David Hogger*

Examiner

## **ANNEX**

From my initial reading of the submission draft of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (SVNP) and the supporting evidence, I have 3 questions to which I require a joint response from both Councils; 1 question for Huntingdonshire District Council; and 21 questions for Sawtry Parish Council. I have requested the submission of a response by **Wednesday 5 July 2023**. All the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

### **Question for both Huntingdonshire District Council and Sawtry Parish Council (3)**

*I would prefer a joint response to these questions but if that cannot be successfully achieved then independent responses should be submitted by the two Councils.*

1. Paragraph 009 ID: 41-009-20190509 of the Planning Practice Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning, advises that 'where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date local plan is in place (i.e. the Updated Local Plan for Huntingdonshire – scheduled for adoption in 2028<sup>1</sup>), the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in the emerging neighbourhood plan, the emerging local plan and the adopted development plan. Could the Councils confirm whether or not such discussions have taken place at this early stage in the preparation of the Updated Local Plan, summarise the conclusions that were drawn, and confirm that at this stage there are no issues of concern regarding the compatibility of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan and the Updated Local Plan 2028?
2. The Environment Agency (Ref: SNPS:22) raise a number of issues regarding flood risk, water demand and water efficiency. Are both Councils satisfied that these issues are satisfactorily addressed in other planning documentation (e.g. the Local Plan) or is there a need for these issues to be referred to in the SVNP?
3. The District Council (Ref: SNPS 15) raises the issue (with regard to electric charging point provision) of whether or not the fourth clause of policy SNP9 (page 34) meets the Basic Conditions. If possible, could an agreed approach on this matter be formulated between the two Councils? If not, separate responses to the matter should be submitted.

### **Questions for Huntingdonshire District Council (1)**

4. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF confirms that Neighbourhood Plans 'should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies'. Is the District Council satisfied that this advice has been followed?

### **Questions for Sawtry Parish Council (21)**

5. Objective 6.2.10 (page 21) refers to enhancing the personal safety of individuals. How does the Parish Council envisage that this objective will be successfully achieved?
6. Could the Parish Council confirm that all the owners of the proposed local green space (policy SNP1 on page 23) have been advised of the proposed LGS designations and that no objections were received (having regard to the advice in the PPG on Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space: Ref ID: 37-019-20140306).
7. I shall visit the proposed local green spaces, but I notice that site LGS2 Land off Bramble End and Monks Way does not include the adjacent pond and surrounding space (see page 66). Is this land

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4 of the Local Development Scheme March 2023

privately owned, afforded protection by other policies or would its designation not meet the criteria for LGS as set out in the NPPF?

**8.** The District Council (Ref: SNPS:9) suggests amendments to the area of LGS9 and the inclusion of two other areas of Local Green Space. Would the identification of this additional LGS meet all the requirements for such designation as set out in the NPPF and if so, where is the evidence that these areas have been given the same consideration as other LGS, including in terms of consultation with the land - owners?

**9.** In the third line of policy SNP3 (page 25) should the word 'or' be replaced by the word 'and'?

**10.** Is there any reason why the community facilities listed in the last paragraph of policy SNP5 (page 29) are not identified on the Policies Map?

**11.** Policy SNP11 (page 37) refers to the 'Built-up Area' and 'Established Employment Areas' but they do not appear to be identified on the Policies Map. Where are the boundaries of these areas identified?

**12.** The British Horse Society (Ref: SNPS:30) is concerned that there is no reference to improving 'links' between Sawtry and the surrounding countryside for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Is there any reason why an appropriate reference to such improvements could not be made and if so, could appropriate wording be suggested?

**13.** The British Horse Society (ref: SNPS:31) suggests the inclusion of text regarding the needs of all Non Motorised Users (paragraph 6.2.8 on page 21). What is the Parish Council's response to this request?

**14.** The District Council suggests the deletion of paragraphs 4.1 to 4.6 relating to the preparation of the SVNP (ref: SNPS:7). What is the opinion of the Parish Council on such a deletion?

**15.** The District Council (ref: SNPS:8) suggests an amendment to paragraph 7.1.2 on The Built Environment (page 21). What is the Parish Council's response to this suggestion?

**16.** The District Council suggests amendments to make reference to funding for the improvement of Greenfields (Ref: SNPS:10). Is such a reference necessary to meet the Basic Conditions and if so, could appropriate wording be formulated?

**17.** The District Council (Ref: SNPS: 11) suggests amendments to policy SNP3 – recreation and leisure (page 25). Are such changes necessary to meet the Basic Conditions and if so, could the Parish Council formulate appropriate wording?

**18.** The District Council suggests amending the wording of policy SNP4 (page 26) – Medical and Health (Ref: SNPS:12). Does the Parish Council agree that this is necessary to meet the Basic Conditions?

**19.** The District Council suggests amendments to policy SNP5 on Community Facilities (page 28) and the associated supporting text (Ref: SNPS: 13). Does the Parish Council agree that these are necessary to meet the Basic Conditions and if so, could appropriate revised wording be formulated?

**20.** The British Horse Society suggests amendments to paragraphs 7.4.1, 7.4.2 and 7.4.3 on page 31 (Ref: SNPS: 32). Does the Parish Council agree that these are necessary to meet the Basic Conditions?

- 21.** The District Council suggests amendments to policy SNP8 (page 32) and the supporting text regarding footpaths and cycle ways (Ref: SNPS: 14). Does the Parish Council agree with these amendments and if so, could appropriate revised wording be formulated?
- 22.** The British Horse Society (Ref: SNPS: 33) proposes amendments to the supporting text with regard to enhancements to Rights of Way. Does the Parish agree that these are necessary to meet the Basic conditions and if so, could appropriate wording be devised?
- 23.** Policy SNP10 Safer Communities (page 35) does not make it clear how a decision maker should interpret the requirements of the policy or how conclusions regarding the implementation of the policy can be satisfactorily drawn. For example, how would a decision maker judge whether or not a place would be 'safe'; whether or not community cohesion would be achieved; and whether or not the personal safety of individuals would be enhanced? Can the Parish Council consider providing amended wording that requires an applicant to demonstrate how their proposal will result in a safer community.
- 24.** The District Council suggests that in order to meet the Basic Conditions, the wording of policy SNP 11 (regarding Business and Employment) on page 37 (and its supporting text) should be amended (Ref: SNPS: 17). Does the Parish Council agree and if so, could appropriate alternative wording be provided?
- 25.** A number of representations were submitted by the Middle Level Commissioners. Is the Parish Council satisfied that the issues they address are adequately covered by other planning policy documentation at local and national level?