

Witcham 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 Objectives and the policies is helpfully described in Section 4. Thereafter the objectives provide a clear structure for the Plan.

The presentation of the Plan is excellent. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. The Plan makes excellent use of various high-quality maps, photographs, and colour-coding. This will ensure that it will comfortably be incorporated into the development plan if it is made.

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 Parish 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 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:

Policy WHM1

This policy provides a broad spatial strategy for the parish and a context for other policies in the Plan. Is there any need for the use 'in principle' in the first sentence?

Policy WHM2

Is there any need for the wording 'where housing would not normally be permitted' in the policy?

Policy WHM5

This is an interesting policy which is underpinned by the Views Assessment.

Policy WHM6

This is a very comprehensive policy which underpinned by the Design Guidance and Codes and the Design Checklist. The Character Area work is very interesting. In the round, the policy is a very good local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy WHM7

This is an excellent, distinctive policy on dark skies

Policy WHM8

The policy takes a positive approach towards sustainable drainage. I am minded to recommend that the first part is simplified so that requires a proportionate approach to on-site drainage (rather than the submitted version which refers initially to all development and then

highlights a proportionate approach). Does the Parish Council have any observations on this proposition?

Policy WHM9

This is a well-constructed proportionate policy.

Policy WHM11

Does the wording used in paragraph 8.18 have regard to the elements of Section 16 of the NPPF which relate to designated heritage assets?

Policy WHM12

Does the first part of the policy have regard to paragraph 216 of the NPPF which takes a more balanced approach towards development proposals which would affect non-designated heritage assets?

Policy WHM13

I saw the importance of the identified community facilities during the visit. This is another excellent policy that supports improvements to existing community facilities and seeks to safeguard existing facilities. It acknowledges that the use and or viability of identified facilities may change in the Plan period.

Representations

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

The District Council proposes a series of revisions to certain policies and the general text. Does the Parish Council have any comments on the suggested revisions?

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 22 October 2025. 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 District Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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30 September 2025