

Sutton Courtenay 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. It is underpinned by a series of background documents which directly inform some of the policies.

The presentation of the Plan is very good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is very clear. The Plan makes good use of various high-quality maps.

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 both with the Parish Council and with the District 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.

Questions for the Parish Council

I set out specific policy clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan:

Policy SC1

This policy has generated a significant degree of commentary from the District Council and the development industry. The latter part of this note provides an opportunity for the Parish Council to comment on individual representations. However, for the purpose of this policy please can the Parish Council comment on the following matters:

- the weight which it has given to the contents of the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan;
- the extent to which the overall effect of the proposed Green Gaps is a de facto Green Belt;
- the extent to which the approach taken is in general conformity to the strategic policies in the development plan; and
- the extent to which the approach taken is strategic (rather than parish-based) in nature.

There are several overlaps between the proposed Green Gaps and the proposed Local Green Spaces (as identified in Policy SC5). Please can the Parish Council expand on how it addressed this overlap in the preparation of the Plan. In addition, how would it anticipate that the District Council would implement the policy in the areas with both designations when the effects of the two policies are different?

Whilst the various proposed Green Gaps and the Local Green Spaces are shown in their individual background documents and on Figures 6.3 and 6.11 the overlaps are difficult to interpret given the lack of clarity of some of the maps and the different scales of the two figures. I can see that the map on page 39 of the Countryside and Green Gap Assessment attempts

to address this position. However, its scale and lack of detail do not have the clarity required by the NPPF for a development plan document. Please can the Parish Council produce a plan (of A3 size) to show these overlaps. If necessary, I am happy for the District Council to help on this matter

Policy SC5

In general terms this is a good policy which is underpinned by Local Green Spaces Assessment. The final part of this note provides an opportunity for the Parish Council to respond to the representations which have commented on the proposed designations.

Policy SC8

In general terms, this is a good policy which has been designed to be applied proportionately.

To what extent does the Parish Council consider that the various criteria are necessary given the way in which they overlap with the contents of the Joint Design Guide?

Policy SC9

I understand the purpose of the policy. However, is it in general conformity with the contents of Core Policy 4 of the adopted Local Plan?

If it is in general conformity, should it be applied proportionately (as is the case with Policy SC8) to avoid placing an onerous burden on the development of smaller schemes (such as the development of a single dwelling on an infill plot)?

Policy SC10

This is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the Character Assessment and Design Code. In the round it is a first-class local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

However, should it be applied proportionately (as is the case with Policy SC8) to avoid placing an onerous burden on the development of domestic or other minor schemes?

Policy SC11

Is the first part of the policy necessary given that it describes a development management/monitoring matter rather than a land use policy?

In the second part of the policy what would be defined as 'quiet' recreation? Might this matter be better addressed as a criterion in the policy or in the supporting text?

Is the policy intended to apply generally throughout the neighbourhood area or more particularly to the Bridge Farm Quarry (as described in paragraph 9.2.33)?

Policy SC12

Is the final part of the policy supporting text (describing the process to be followed) rather than a land use policy?

Policy SC13

In the round this is a good policy. I saw the importance of the identified community facilities during the visit.

I am minded to recommend that the order of the two parts of the policy is reversed to provide clarity about its effect. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy SC14

In general terms this is a good policy

However how would 'a significant improvement' be defined? Is this element of the policy necessary given that the associated works would naturally result in a significant improvement of the facilities provided?

Does the second bullet point of the second part of the policy conflict with the criteria included in Policy SC13?

Question for the District Council

Is the preparation of the emerging Joint Local Plan still proceeding to the timetable as described in the Local Development Scheme?

Representations

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

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations from:

- Mark Doodes Planning (Responses 7 and 9);
- Cauldwell and Sons (response 10);
- Victoria Land (Responses 11 and 12);
- Roebuck Land (Response 17);
- Oxfordshire County Council (Response 18);
- Bloor Homes (Response 19);
- MEPC (Response 20); and
- FCC Environment (Response 21).

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

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 6 September 2023. 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

Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Development Plan

14 August 2023