

North Norfolk Local Plan Examination

Russell Williams
Assistant Director – Planning
North Norfolk District Council
Holt Road
Cromer
NR27 9EN

30 August 2024

Dear Mr Williams

NORTH NORFOLK LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Thank you for your letter dated 16 August 2024 in response to my post hearings letter dated 24 May 2024¹ and for the Council's mostly positive approach to seek to address the main soundness issues raised. I have the following response.

1. The intention to base the plan's examination on the housing monitoring information from April 2023 is in order to provide stability but may need to be reviewed if the timescale for the future steps set out in your letter slips significantly.
2. The receipt of a planning application for Site W07/1 at Wells is noted but this does not change the merits of the allocation set out in my previous letter and in the light of unallocated sites on the southern side of the town with little or no impact on the most sensitive coastal landscape character areas. Given the conclusion of the examination that the allocation be deleted any decision to approve the application should be considered a departure from the emerging local plan in conflict with its evidence base.
3. The plan places significant reliance on housing delivery from an untried and unproven (in this district) small growth villages policy, as opposed to the previous approach of allocating sites in such villages. It follows that the wording of Policy SS1(3) and criterion f must not render the policy ineffective by causing uncertainty and/or acting to deter schemes from coming forward. The matter can be discussed at any further public hearings, but the latest wording you suggest for criterion f seems encouraging of schemes and may therefore be acceptable.
4. I must emphasise that, in addition to publishing an updated Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs assessment, the Council should consider what steps need to be taken to address the findings in the plan, including if necessary proposing allocations or amending the criteria in

¹ Not released until 19 July 2024 due to the general election.

Policy HOU5. Any proposed changes to the plan should form part of the forthcoming six-week public consultation.

5. Turning to the Council's proposals to increase the supply and flexibility of housing delivery by approximately 1,300 to 1,500 additional dwellings over the plan period, depending on how it is done this should be a good basis for the examination to proceed. This is without prejudice to the future findings of the examination which will depend on the evidence presented, consultation responses and any further public hearings.
6. However, the Council will know better than anyone the latest position in relation to housing completions, unidentified sites coming forward, nutrient neutrality constraints and the latest progress in relation to large schemes, particularly those at Fakenham and North Walsham. These matters are likely to be raised at any future public hearings and will have a bearing on the number of additional dwellings needed to ensure an adequate housing land supply going forward.
7. The timeline the Council proposes for the various steps to progress the plan are acceptable but should not be allowed to slip significantly. Please keep me advised as to progress. The Council will be aware of the letter from the Minister of State dated 30 July 2024 regarding 'pragmatism' in local plan examinations and the reply from the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate dated 1 August 2024. In this case the plan is capable of being found sound with limited additional work to address soundness issues, but that additional work should be progressed at pace.
8. This letter should be placed on the examination website for information. I will ask the programme officer to inform hearing participants when it is published but I am not inviting or accepting submissions from other parties at this stage.

David Reed

INSPECTOR