

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

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:

General

The Plan comments only in a tangential way about the Local Plan strategic site allocation (Land at Northfield - Policy STRAT 12). Was this approach intentional?

Policy STRAT 12 of the Local Plan provides a high level of detail about the development of the strategic site. Please can the Parish Council advise about the extent to which the policies in the neighbourhood plan have been designed to apply (or indeed not to apply) within the strategic allocation?

Policy GARS1

The lists of facilities in the policy have been carefully-considered. I saw their importance to the community during the visit. They are also shown effectively on the maps in the Plan.

In terms of the policy wording how would the local community and the facility operator determine if a community facility 'is no longer needed'? How would any difference of opinion between the community and the operator on this point be resolved?

Could the policy more simply comment about circumstances where the facility was 'no longer used by the local community'?

Policy GARS2

I looked at the importance of the views during the visit.

Please can the Parish Council advise about the way in which the views were defined?

Does the Parish Council have any comments on the representations received from the District Council and L&Q about the relationship between some of the identified views and the allocation of land at Northfield in Policy STRAT 12 of the Local Plan?

Policy GARS4

To what extent does the proposed Local Gap add value to the application of national and local Green Belt policies?

As submitted the policy is less restrictive than national and local Green Belt policies. It would be helpful if the Parish Council explained its thinking on this matter.

The proposed Local Gap does not consistently follow man-made or natural boundaries. It would be helpful if the Parish Council explained its thinking on this matter and the extent to which the imprecise boundaries may create issues for the District Council as it seeks to apply the policy in a consistent way in the Plan period

I understand the approach taken towards the strategic site as expressed in paragraph 6.5 of the Plan. Nevertheless, has the Parish Council fully assessed the extent to which the identification of the Local Gap boundary would be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan (especially Policy STRAT 12)?

Policy GARS6

In general terms the approach taken in this policy sets out a spatial strategy for the parish.

The built-up area boundary includes several areas which are not 'built up' in a traditional sense. Elsewhere, the identification of a built-up area boundary would be a matter of local judgement. However, in this case the defined boundary has the potential to have a significant implication on the way in which Green Belt policy is applied by the District Council. Please can the Parish Council explain the way in which it defined the proposed boundary and the principles which it applied as part of the process?

Policy GARS7

This policy sets out a positive approach to design. It helpfully applies the South Oxfordshire Design Guide to local circumstances.

Plainly individual proposed (based on their size and nature) will have different impacts on the policy. As such I am minded to recommend that part B of the Policy is worded so that it can be applied in a proportionate fashion. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy GARS8

In general terms the policy takes a positive approach to biodiversity.

Nevertheless, I am minded to recommend that the order of the elements of the policy is reversed so that it has a positive focus. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

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 made by Oxfordshire County Council (Response 10) and by L&Q (Response 11).

The District Council proposes a series of revisions to certain policies and the supporting text in the Plan (Response 2). 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 August 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

Garsington Neighbourhood Development Plan

1 August 2023