

Twyford 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 vision for the neighbourhood area. It addresses a range of issues which relate closely to its character and appearance. The presentation and layout of the Plan is very good. The Plan is supported by excellent photographs and maps.

The wider package has been prepared and presented in a very professional and effective manner. The Plan is a distinctive and very well-written document which provides a clear and compelling vision for the neighbourhood area. Policies TW3, TW4-6, TW7-9, TW15, TW16, TW17 and TW18 are very distinctive to the neighbourhood area. Policies TW4-6 provide an appropriate approach to ensure the future vitality and viability of Twyford village centre. In the round the Plan balances opportunities for sensitive, well-designed development with strong environmental and community aspirations. The relationships between the vision, the objectives and the policies are very clear.

The Design Guidelines and Codes is an excellent document. It will provide a clear context for distinctive, high-quality design throughout the Plan period. The non-planning matters in Section 7 are both comprehensive and well-considered. Several of the Projects will complement the land use policies in the Plan.

Points for Clarification and observations

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 my report and in recommending any modifications to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. I set out specific clarification points and observations for the Parish Council below in the order in which the policies concerned appear in the submitted Plan.

Policy TW2

The ambitions of the policy are clear.

However, part C reads as a combination of policy, a community action and a process matter. I am minded to recommend that it is simplified and that the associated details are repositioned into the supporting text.

Does the Parish Council have any observations on this proposition?

Policy TW4

This policy takes a positive approach to the future of the village

Does the Parish Council have any specific observations on the Borough Council's comments about the way in which village boundary has been defined?

Policy TW5

The policy takes a positive approach to the regeneration of the village centre.

Is there an up-to-date position on the Regeneration Scheme beyond that already set out in paragraph 5.33 of the Plan?

How would part B of the policy operate if an approved and costed Regeneration Scheme was not in place?

Policy TW6

Does the Parish Council have any specific observations on the Borough Council's comments about the wording of the policy?

Policy TW8

I can see that the supporting text sets out the context to the policy and highlights development plan experience elsewhere.

Nevertheless, has the Parish Council assessed the extent that the policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan? As the Borough Council comment, might the policy have potential implications for site capacities. In addition, could some higher density development be acceptable within some parts of the neighbourhood area? In addition, removing the opportunity for higher densities in appropriate areas may make less effective or efficient use of land and would reduce the quantum and variety of housing types to be able to respond to local needs.

In this context there any other specific local evidence to support the policy beyond that included in the supporting text?

Has the policy been tested for any potential effects on commercial viability?

Policy TW10

The approach taken on this matter is both comprehensive and ambitious. As the Plan acknowledges the policy context for encouraging higher energy efficiency standards at a local plan or neighbourhood plan scale is complex.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on the Borough Council's representation on this matter? In addition, to what extent has the Parish Council assessed this policy against the Written Ministerial Statement of March 2015?

In any event, Parts C, D and E of the policy read as supporting text (to Parts A and B) rather than as policies. Please could the Parish Council explain the basis on which it crafted these parts of policy?

Has the policy been tested for any potential effects on commercial viability?

Policy TW13

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on the observations on this policy made by the development industry?

Is the evidence for the policy sufficiently robust and up-to-date?

Could this policy be more effectively combined with Policy TW14 to provide a more flexible, viability-led policy?

Policy TW16

The Design Guidelines and Codes is an excellent document. It will provide a clear context for distinctive, high-quality design throughout the Plan period.

In the round the policy is an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy TW17

This is another excellent policy. It takes a very positive approach towards the ongoing initiative to establish a community hub in Twyford. It directly relates to local circumstances with regards to community provision and the nature and location of the chosen site.

Matters for clarification/updates from the Borough Council

I note that the Council intends to update its Local Development Scheme in due course. However please can I have an indicative timetable from the Borough Council's for the next stages in the Local plan-preparation process.

Please can I have updates on the following planning applications:

- Land north of New Bath Road (in the David Wilson Homes representation); and
- Land at Bridge Farm (as set out in the Croudace Homes representation).

Representations

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan in addition to those specifically mentioned in this Note on a policy-by-policy basis?

Does it wish to respond to the specific comments made by:

- David Wilson Homes;
- First West Homes Limited;
- Bridge House Care Village;
- Croudace Homes;
- Berkeley Strategic Land Limited; and
- British Horse Society?

The representation from Wokingham Borough Council proposes several detailed refinements to the Plan and its policies. Some have been raised on a policy-by-policy basis in this note. It would be helpful if the Parish Council would indicate the extent to which it would be willing to incorporate the other comments into the Plan.

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the matters raised in this Note by 6 February 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 am happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled please could it all come to me directly from the Borough Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Twyford Neighbourhood Development Plan.

4 January 2023