



11 February 2019

Mr Greg Hewitt
Town Clerk
Wells-next-the-Sea, Town Council
Wells Community Hospital
Mill Road,
Wells-next-the-Sea,
Norfolk, NR23 1RF

Our Ref: 967/12/01/11

RE: Application to Designate a Neighbourhood Planning Area

Dear Mr Hewitt

Thank you for your application and supporting statement on behalf of Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council to designate the parished area of Wells as an area in which to undertake neighbourhood planning. This was successfully validated on 11/02/2019.

We can advise that in accordance with The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 through delegated authority of the Planning Portfolio holder in conjunction with the Planning Policy Manager it is resolved to **approve** the designation of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area which covers the entire parish, as received with your statement on the 08/02/2019.

The map showing the designated area, application form and supporting statement will shortly be published on the Council's web site:

<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

Cllr Karen Ward - Planning Portfolio Holder, NNDC

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Phillip Rowson - Head of Planning, NNDC

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Information Sheet

The District Council, as the responsible body in law, will publish at key stages the emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP) documents of the Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan and the formal advice given; however, it remains the responsibility of the Town Council to ensure the local community are kept up-to-date and informed with progress and we would recommend that a suitable page is created on the Town Council's own web site. We understand that a Steering Group has been formed, but please note that formal submissions of the Plan should be endorsed by the Town Council, which in the eyes of the legislation are the "Qualifying Body".

Once a draft Plan is submitted to the Council for formal independent examination, it is the responsibility of the District Council to accept any modifications recommended by the Inspector to alter the emerging plan accordingly and publish any revised referendum version of the Plan. This means that once the Plan has been submitted the Steering Group is **no longer able to make any further changes** of its own to the Plan.

We welcome that the Steering Group has sought early engagement with the Council and encourage the continuation of this as the Plan progresses. During the development of the Plan the qualified Officers can provide professional advice in relation to policy formation, evidence base, technical support and statutory/ legislative matters.

The Council have a dual role to provide professional planning advice but also later in the process to review the plan formally through independent examination, to progress any submission to referendum and ultimately to "make" the Plan – this is the process by which it is adopted as a public and statutory Plan and thereon forms part of the Development Plan for North Norfolk.

It is worth drawing your attention to a number of specific local guidance notes and check sheets which have been produced and will be added to in due course. These are available at:

<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning>

In addition the growing evidence base of the emerging Local Plan is available in the document library <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/planning-policy/document-library>

Officers may also be able to assist in helping to identify suitable supporting evidence in addition to the published documents and would encourage early discussion.

In terms of national guidance we would direct you to the Planning Practice Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>. This is the national guidance that sits behind the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It provides detailed implementation guidance on many subjects including housing need, flooding, and explains how the neighbourhood planning system works and should be considered. We recommend that you familiarise yourselves with this detailed guidance throughout the writing of the Plan.

Locality is the community organisation that provides support for Neighbourhood Planning nationally. There are extensive guides and best practice examples at:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org>

Locality has also published a road map and are the organisation that administers the Government's Neighbourhood Planning support and grant requirements.

As part of the Basic Condition tests, Neighbourhood Plans need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the District and policies that seek to duplicate or repeat existing Development Plan policies and or national policy will fall foul of conformity rules and will run the strong risk of deletion at examination. A Neighbourhood Plan should be focused on what additional benefit it can bring to the local area and should not repeat existing local or national policy. We would therefore advise that the starting point of any Neighbourhood Plan is a review of the existing and emerging Development Plan Policy base, in relation to the chosen subjects.

Although the legislation makes clear that any Neighbourhood Plan needs to be in general conformity with the adopted Development Plan, i.e. at present the North Norfolk Core Strategy & Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Documents, Design Guide and Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Documents, it should also take account of the emerging Local Plan. It is this document that will supersede the Core Strategy and our advice would be that, given the advanced stages this has now reached, the Town Council will run the risk of the Wells NP being classed as "out of date" in planning terms if the emerging NP only seeks to conform with the current Development Plan. The NP therefore needs to take account of the updated policies in the emerging Local Plan.

Guidance note NPG2 on the above link, provides you with conformity information in relation to the Core Strategy and further advice on national policy and the emerging Local Plan can be obtained from officers at the regular meetings envisaged. The subjects/policies of the Plan should be kept to that of Land Use planning and supported by evidence. In developing your Plan and carrying out community consultation you may wish to identify within the Plan some 'Community Aspirations' which help to meet the expectations of issue expressed by residents. These are separate from policies and do not carry any weight in making planning decisions.

As the "responsible body" in separate environmental legislation, when the time comes a detailed Screening Opinion request should be submitted to the Council and we will undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan on your behalf. These are statutory requirements and need to be undertaken by qualified professionals to the satisfaction of the Council, when the policy content is known. We do not advise that these are undertaken by others without the knowledge and agreement of the Council.

If in future you are considering the commission any work to be carried out in support of the Plan we would advise you to seek our opinion on value for money and purpose before appointing a consultant.

I look forward to assisting the Town Council and the Steering Group through this process.

Iain Withington
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