

West Chiltington 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 which is underpinned by distinctive objectives.

The presentation of the Plan is good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The Plan makes good use of various maps and high-quality photographs. Sections 4 sets out a robust vision and core objectives of the Plan

The Plan is underpinned by a comprehensive package of appendices. This is best practice. In this context the Design Guide is very impressive.

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:

Consultation and Engagement

I note the details in the Consultation Statement about the way in which the Parish Council engaged with local people, statutory bodies, and landowners as the Plan was being prepared.

Several of the representations make comment about the extent of the processes used. It would be helpful if the Parish Council responded to those comments.

Policy H1

This is a good policy which sets a spatial strategy for the parish.

The fifth criterion reads out of context to the other four criteria. I am minded to recommend that it is repositioned so that it forms a separate element of the policy. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy H2

The criteria in the policy are commendable.

I am minded to recommend that the opening element is modified so that the policy can be applied in a proportionate way. This will acknowledge that infill development will naturally be of a small scale. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy H2a

I noted the position of the proposed housing allocation to the overall village during the visit.

The criteria in the policy restrict the development of the 4ha site to 15 homes. To what extent has the Parish Council assessed this resulting density against national policy as set out in Section 11 of the NPPF?

Is the Parish Council satisfied that access can be secured into the site, and that development can proceed within the Plan period?

Policy H2b

I note that planning permission has now been granted for the residential development of the site.

In this context I am minded to recommend that the policy is retained in the Plan and that the supporting text is modified to provide a context for any revised planning applications on the site. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy H3

This is an excellent policy which is underpinned by the Design Guide. In the round, it is a very good local response to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Policy H4

The overall approach taken in the policy is very robust. Plainly the yield of any site will be determined by its size. However, is there a specific justification for the cap of five homes?

Policy EH1

The first part of the policy clearly applies to the development management process.

Is the second part of the policy simply a statement or does it require that development proposals within an identified corridor should deliver the measures identified in the six criteria?

Policy EH2

Does the policy bring any added value to national and local planning policies?

Policy EH3

I saw the importance of trees and hedges during the visit. The policy is commendably comprehensive.

Criterion 5 may not always be appropriate or practicable. I am minded to recommend modifications to address this matter. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Criterion 7 reads as a process/management issue rather than a land use planning matter. As such I am minded to recommend that it is relocated into the supporting text. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy EH6

I am minded to recommend that the order of the first and second parts of the policy are reversed so that it has a positive rather than a negative focus.

The third part of the policy is supporting text rather than a land use policy. I am minded to recommend that it is repositioned into the supporting text.

Does the Parish Council have any comments on these propositions?

Policy EH7

This is an excellent and locally-distinctive policy.

Policy EH10

I looked carefully at the land concerned and saw that the policy has a clear purpose. However, is there any reason why the policy comments about proposals which need planning permission?

Is the implication of the policy that uses which would retain the openness of the land concerned (such as sports pitches) would be supported?

I am minded to recommend the removal of the proposed housing allocation (Policy H2b) now that planning permission has been granted. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy EH11

This is an excellent and locally-distinctive policy which addresses an important District wide issue insofar as it applies in the parish.

Policy GA1

The policy has an appropriate focus. However, I am minded to recommend that it is modified so that it can be applied in a proportionate way and where it is practicable to do so. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy GA3

Does the policy bring any added value to national and local planning policies?

Policy EE2

I am minded to recommend that the order of the policy is altered so that the second and third parts appear before the first. Does the Parish Council have any comments on this proposition?

Policy EE4

I am satisfied that the approach taken is entirely appropriate. However, for my clarity does the policy relate to individual signs on business premises (which are land use matters) or highway (brown) directional signs to specific businesses (which are a highways matter)?

Policy EE6

Given that the Building Regulations now address digital connectivity for new buildings at a national level does the policy have any additional value?

Policy LC5

I looked at the proposed Local Green Spaces during the visit. The policy is impressively underpinned by the details in Appendix 5.

It would be helpful if the Parish Council advised about the mapping issue relating to Monkmead Wood raised by the National Park Authority in its representation.

I would also be grateful if the Parish Council commented about the extent to which it assessed the extent to which a local green space designation for Monkmead Wood is necessary given the site's location in the National Park (in accordance with Planning practice guidance - ID: 37-011-20140306).

The policy wording goes well beyond the matter-of-fact approach in paragraph 107 of the NPPF. Is there a specific reason why the Parish Council has pursued such an approach?

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:

- Southern Water (HDC Reference 9);
- South Downs National Park Authority (HDC Reference 10); and
- West Sussex County Council (HDC Reference 13).

The District Council proposes a series of revisions to certain policies and the supporting text in the Plan. It would be very helpful if the Parish Council commented on the suggested revisions?

Protocol for responses

I would be grateful for responses to the questions raised by 15 August 2025. 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

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11 July 2025