



Statement of Significance

Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Review

1. The Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Examination in September 2019 after five years research and consultation. However, the Examination was undertaken in difficult circumstances since the local elections in May 2019 had changed the nature of SODC politics to such an extent that in October 2019, the Secretary of State had to direct SODC not to withdraw the Emerging Local Plan LP 2035.
2. Against this background, the Examiner, Andrew Ashcroft, could not predict any delay which might result. In his Report he stated that,

“the timings involved and unusual circumstances currently experienced in the District have not permitted the submitted WNP to take account of the emerging Local Planning context. Nevertheless the submitted WNP has been proposed within its wider development context. In so doing it has relied on up-to-date information and research which has underpinned existing and emerging planning policy documents in the District. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.”

He added,

“There is no certainty of the eventual retaining of SODC LP 2035 or about the timetable for adopting the emerging Local Plan. In the event that sites proposed for development in the WNP are eventually released from Green Belt, there would be an unhealthy stand-off period before the second part of WNP policy took effect. It would not provide NPPF required quality or certainty for landowners or potential developers.”

The Examiner submitted his Report in February, 2020 and in his executive summary he declared,

“Subject to a series of recorded modifications set out in the Report, I conclude that the WNP meets all necessary legal requirements and should proceed to Referendum”

The modifications consisted of several sections of the submitted WNP relating to changes in the Green Belt in the area being deleted in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance. The modifications included removal of three out of four WNP *village enhancement* sites – specifically, the 3 requiring Green Belt adjustment - all in the east of Wheatley. The Examiner advised that if the WNP with these modifications was put to Referendum and subsequently adopted (or *Made*), it could then be subject to a Review at a later date – with far less risk of delay by “factors beyond WNP control”.

3. By December 2020 the exceptional circumstances relating to the adoption of the SODC Local Plan (LP2035) had been resolved and LP2035 was then formally adopted on 10

December 2020. On 06 May 2021 the WNP went to Local Referendum and was passed with 1359 in support and 189 against. With the Local Plan LP 2035 and the *made* WNP in place the WNP Committee, with the agreement of the Wheatley Parish Council (the Qualifying Body), resolved to act on the Examiner's recommendation and proceeded to prepare a first Review of the WNP.

4. The first draft of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Review (WNPR) was ready by December 2021 and submitted to SODC for discussion and comments. The WNPR contains changes of a minor (non-material) nature (eg correcting factual information, updating references to planning documents) and also major material changes as follows,
 - a Chapter 8 describes the introduction of a new Design Code and Policies. This has been prepared in an effort to address issues of housing design, layout and context both for new developments and in-fill projects. The Design Guidance and Codes are listed in detail in **Appendix 8**.
 - b **Chapters 10, 11 and 12** describe the *village enhancements* that have now been reinstated in the WNPR. These involve release of Green Belt in accordance with the provisions of the Local Plan 2035 and the NPPF, rationalisation of the eastern part of the village and the provision of recreational space with a village Green Route.
 - c In view of the proposals described in chapters 10, 11 and 12, SODC recommended that a new Environmental Report be commissioned and this is now available in **Appendix 5**.

5. The Qualifying Body is fully supportive of the changes being proposed to the *made* WNP as summarised above.

John Fox (Chairman)
Roy Gordon (Vice-chairman)
WNP Committee

Alison Sercombe (Chair)
Michelle Legg (Secretary)
Wheatley Parish Council

10 June, 2022