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Report on Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022 - 2036

An Examination undertaken for Huntingdonshire District Council with the support of Sawtry Parish Council on the March 2023 submission version of the Plan.

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/SVNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body: Sawtry Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Designated Area as identified on Map 1 on page 44;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2022 – 2036; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022—2036

- 1.1 The Parish of Sawtry lies midway between Huntingdon and Peterborough and is dissected by the A1M. Indeed, the actual settlement of Sawtry lies immediately west of the motorway. The eastern part of the Parish is relatively flat while to the west the landscape is more undulating. Much of the Parish is agricultural in nature and this provides an attractive setting for the village itself.
- 1.2 The village includes a number of important heritage assets and open areas, which I saw on my visit, including the village green. There is a relatively wide range of community facilities and services available, including schools, places of worship, shops, meeting halls and recreation facilities.
- 1.3 The Consultation Statement (March 2023) confirms that, although there was a failed attempt in 2017 to develop a neighbourhood development plan, the process of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan commenced in 2019. However, progress was thwarted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Parish Council had to consider an alternative approach to public consultation.

- 1.4 Unable to enter into face-to-face discussions, the Parish Council (via the Neighbourhood Planning Group) employed a number of other initiatives, including distributing questionnaires to all households in the Parish; making on-line questionnaires available (for example to community groups and businesses); telephone interviews; and placing articles in the local magazine (the Sawtry Eye). Once Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed, public presentations and displays were arranged.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.5 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), with the agreement of the Sawtry Parish Council (SPC).
- 1.6 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with extensive experience in the preparation, examination and implementation of development plans and other planning policy documents. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.7 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.8 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions;
 - Whether the Plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;

- it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
- it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.9 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.10 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)¹; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.11 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.²

¹ The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

² This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Huntingdonshire, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. Work has commenced on an updated Local Plan but is at a very early stage, with the examination programmed to start in Autumn 2027.³
- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 20 July 2021 and it is this document to which I have had regard in determining whether the SVNP meets the Basic Conditions along with its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the submission version of the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (March 2023);
 - the Map on page 44 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement (March 2023);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (March 2023);
 - the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Request and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Request, both March 2023;
 - the Evidence for Local Green Spaces (March 2023);
 - the Site Allocation Evidence (March 2023);⁴
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the responses to my Questions dated 8 June 2023, from both Huntingdonshire District Council and Sawtry Parish Council, dated 28 June and 30 June 2023 respectively.⁵

³ See Huntingdonshire Local Development Scheme March 2023.

⁴ View the Regulation 16 documents at:

<https://consult.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/kse/event/37400>

⁵ View at: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 25 June 2023, to familiarise myself with the locality, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The SVNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by SPC as the qualifying body for an area that was originally designated by HDC on 23 October 2019.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies (on the front cover) the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2022 to 2036.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 The Consultation Statement summarises the approach to consultation undertaken by the Parish Council. Following the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in in autumn 2019, local residents were invited to provide feedback on the contents of the Plan – both written and on-line. All Parish Council meetings included an agenda item for an up-date to be given on the preparation of the SVNP; newsletters were distributed to all residents and significant use was made of Facebook to disseminate information.

3.5 I am able to conclude that opportunities to contribute towards the preparation of the SVNP have been available to all interested parties at the relevant stages, including at both the Regulation 14 stage (5 December 2022 – 28 January 2023) and the Regulation 16 stage (12 April 2023 – 24 May 2023). I consider that, overall, the approach towards the preparation of the SVNP has been conducted in a fair and inclusive manner, especially bearing in mind the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, I am satisfied sufficient regard has been had to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and the process has been procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

3.6 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

3.7 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.⁶

Human Rights

3.8 I have seen no evidence that the Plan breaches Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998), and it is not a matter that has been raised by any of the respondents.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA Request– March 2023) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA Request – March 2023). The conclusion reached was that the SVNP does not require a full SEA or HRA to be undertaken because the Plan would not have any significant adverse environmental effects. Having read the documentation, I support this conclusion.

Main Issues

4.2 I have approached the assessment of compliance with the Basic Conditions of the SVNP as two main matters:

- General issues of compliance of the Plan, as a whole; and
- Specific issues of compliance of the Plan policies.

⁶ See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

General Issues of Compliance of the Plan

National Policy, Sustainable Development and the Development Plan

- 4.3 There are fourteen chapters in the SVNP, which are the Foreword; Neighbourhood Planning; the Village Scene; the Neighbourhood Planning Project; Community Consultation; Vision and Objectives; Policies; Cross Reference; Non-planning Objectives; Maps; Statistical Tables; Implementation and Delivery; Monitoring and Review; and Glossary of Terms.
- 4.4 It is clear to me that HDC and SPC have co-operated in the preparation of the SVNP⁷ and, subject to the detailed comments and modifications that I set out below, I conclude that the SVNP has had proper regard to national policy and guidance. I also conclude that subject to the recommendations that I make:
- the SVNP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan for the area, and that overall, the document provides an appropriate framework that will enable Sawtry to continue to evolve as a community whilst ensuring that the quality of life, particularly for residents, will be retained and enhanced; and
 - that the policies, as modified, are supported by appropriate evidence, are sufficiently clear and unambiguous and that they can be applied with confidence.⁸

Specific Issues of Compliance of the Plan's Policies

Foreword (page 6)

- 4.5 The Foreword succinctly summarises how the Neighbourhood Plan has been formulated and the processes that its preparation has followed.

Neighbourhood Planning (page 6)

- 4.6 Chapter 2 appropriately describes the function of the document, the legislative background and the relationship between the SVNP, the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and other supplementary planning documents.

The Village Scene (page 11)

- 4.7 The history of Sawtry is set out in Chapter 3, together with background information regarding, for example, heritage assets; transport; employment; residential development; and community facilities. This

⁷ Reflecting, for example, the advice in PPG IDs 41-040-20160211 and 41-009-20190509.

⁸ PPG Reference ID: 41-041020140306.

provides a helpful summary of the evolution of the village and the current services and facilities that it provides.

[The Neighbourhood Planning Project \(page 18\)](#)

4.8 Chapter 4 summarises the approach that has been taken by SPC towards the preparation of the SVNP. HDC suggests the deletion of this Chapter. I acknowledge that the text encapsulates the many difficulties that have been encountered in the preparation of the document and demonstrates the doggedness of the Parish Council in seeking to complete the process. However, I agree with HDC that its inclusion in the SVNP is not necessary to meet the Basic Conditions and recommend Chapter 4 is moved from the main body of the statutory Plan, to form a new Appendix 2 to the SVNP as in **PM1**.

[Community Consultation \(page 19\)](#)

4.9 Chapter 5 describes with clarity the consultation processes that have been employed, including as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions.

[Vision and Objectives \(page 20\)](#)

4.10 The Vision and Objectives for the Parish are clearly established in Chapter 6 of the SVNP. I am satisfied that all the objectives satisfactorily reflect existing national and local planning guidance.

4.11 The British Horse Society⁹ suggests the inclusion of text (in a number of locations in the SVNP) regarding the objective of supporting the needs of 'non motorised users'¹⁰ (e.g. horse riders). Whilst I agree that the needs of horse riders are a valid consideration, I am not convinced that the inclusion of the suggested objective in paragraph 6.2.8 (page 21) is an appropriate location for such a reference. I consider the objective in paragraph 6.2.8 is intended primarily to apply to movements associated with functional activities, such as travelling to work, education facilities or shopping and not to leisure pastimes.

4.12 I am aware that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan up to 2036 (HLP), in policy LP16, supports opportunities for sustainable travel and seeks to protect or enhance 'non-motorised users' routes'. I consider that there is no justification for repeating this support in the SVNP and it is not necessary in order to meet the Basic Conditions.

[Conclusion on Introductory Chapters 1 to 6](#)

4.13 I consider that, particularly having regard to the objectives of the SPC, the first six chapters of the SVNP do provide helpful background

⁹ Representation Ref: SNPS:31.

¹⁰ Representation Ref: SNPS:32.

information for the decision maker and that, subject to **PM1**, the Basic Conditions are met.

[Policies \(page 21\)](#)

The Built Environment

- 4.14 This chapter of the SVNP explains the planning framework (with regard to housing) provided by the HLP – including the allocation of two housing sites (East of Glebe Farm and South of Gidding Road).
- 4.15 HDC¹¹ suggest an amendment to paragraph 7.1.2 in order to clarify the position regarding windfall and rural exception sites for housing. I consider this is necessary to provide clarity for the decision maker and I note that the Parish Council has agreed.¹² This modification will accord with national advice and meets the Basic Conditions and I recommend accordingly in **PM2**.

Policy SNP1 - The natural environment and protecting green spaces (page 22)

- 4.16 Policy SNP1 seeks to enhance the natural character of the village and its setting. The policy identifies 17 Local Green Spaces (LGS), which I saw on my visit. Planning advice¹³ stipulates that landowners should be contacted at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. SPC has not been able to ascertain details of the owners of parts of two of the proposed LGS sites. These are sites 13 and 17 (see plan on page 48 of the SVNP).
- 4.17 The Parish Council's document entitled 'Evidence for Local Green Spaces' (March 2023) includes a plan which is entitled Enclosure 1: District Council map of maintained Sawtry Grass Areas. The Plan identifies 'land pending ownership' with regard to:
- a very small area to the north-east of site 17; and
 - a majority of site 13 (a small area to the north-west is identified as being owned and managed by HDC)
- 4.18 I would expect to see clearly documented evidence detailing the reasonable, best endeavours, to ascertain details about the owners of the aforementioned two areas of proposed LGS, bearing in mind the land use policy constraints that come with LGS designation. Whilst I recognise more general opportunities were available to comment through the Regulation 14 and 16 consultations, in the absence of robust evidence of the focused, ongoing efforts made during the period of Plan preparation, I cannot be certain that the owners have had a reasonable opportunity to engage. On that basis I recommend, in **PM3**, that the small part of site

¹¹ Representation Ref: SNPS:8.

¹² See response to my Question 15.

¹³ Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, PPG Reference ID: 37-019-20140306.

17 and the majority of site 13 (which are identified as 'land pending ownership' in the aforementioned document) should be deleted from the proposed LGS designation. I do not consider that the deletion of these two parcels of land will have any significant consequences for either the 'deleted' or the 'retained' LGS land.

- 4.19 HDC suggests¹⁴ that LGS9 should incorporate connections to potential development to the north (Glatton Road development) and should also include two green spaces at Gidding Road.¹⁵ I do not consider that there is currently sufficient evidence to conclude that such designations would meet the requirements for LGS designation. I am told by the Parish Council that construction on the Glatton Road site is expected 'shortly'.¹⁶ At this very early stage in the development at Glatton Road, there is currently no maintained open space and therefore there is no land that is demonstrably special to the local community or is of particular local significance (see also paragraph 4.24 below).
- 4.20 With regard to green spaces at the Bovis Homes site in Gidding Road (Ref 19/00462/REM) and the Local Plan allocation south of Gidding Road, similar arguments exist. In any event I have seen no evidence that the owners of any of the aforementioned land have been consulted or would support such a designation.
- 4.21 Concerns have been raised by HDC with regard to whether or not the landowner has agreed to the allocation of LGS on land at Haynes Close (LGS10).¹⁷ I am not aware of any objection to this designation and the Parish Council has confirmed, in response to my Question 6, that all owners of the proposed LGS have been notified, with the exception of parts of LGS13 and LGS17 (as referred to above).
- 4.22 With regard to the remaining designated LGS sites, I am satisfied that they are particularly important to the local community and meet the other requirements of NPPF paragraphs 101¹⁸ and 102. I also note that SPC confirms that (with the above exceptions), all owners have been notified of the proposed LGS designations.¹⁹
- 4.23 The Middle Level Commissioners have commented on a number of the proposed areas of LGS.²⁰ However, the final clause in the policy makes it clear that the appropriate use of an area of LGS in relation to 'surface water flood risk attenuation and associated infrastructure' will be supported and I consider that to be sufficient in these circumstances where policies in the HLP address issues of flooding and water

¹⁴ Representation Ref: SNPS:9.

¹⁵ Representation Ref: SNPS:9.

¹⁶ See answer to my Question 8.

¹⁷ Representation Ref: SNPS:4.

¹⁸ LGS designation should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.

¹⁹ See answer to my Question 6 to SPC.

²⁰ Representation Ref: SNPS:28.

infrastructure (e.g. policy LP5 on Flood Risk and policy LP6 on Waste Water Management).

- 4.24 I agree with the Parish Council that any further areas of LGS are best considered in any future review of the SVNP. By their very nature, potential future areas of LGS cannot be proposed with sufficient certainty and in any event the advice in the NPPF makes it clear that the LGS should be in existence, otherwise how can the land, for example, be deemed to be of value to the local community. In any event, I have seen no evidence that the landowner(s) would be supportive of such designations.
- 4.25 As modified, I am satisfied that policy SNP1 has regard to national policies and meets all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP2 – Climate change mitigation (page 24)

- 4.26 Policy SNP2 establishes the Parish Council's approach towards mitigating climate change. For example, support in principle is given to renewable energy regeneration and small-scale community led renewable energy generation. As such, I conclude that the policy will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP3 – Recreation and leisure (page 25)

- 4.27 Land north of Greenfields is identified for community use and, with one exception, policy SNP3 clearly establishes the requirements. In the interests of clarity, however, I consider the third line of the policy should be modified in order to remove any uncertainty regarding the provision of parking and drainage measures. This is recommended in **PM4**.
- 4.28 HDC²¹ suggests amendments to policy SNP3 and I agree that it should be made clear that the last sentence of the policy applies to the whole Parish, and I recommend accordingly in **PM5**.
- 4.29 HDC suggests amendments²² with regard to the funding of Greenfields, which I understand is now progressing. SPC has agreed that paragraphs 7.3.2 and 12.8 should be updated to reflect the current position. I agree that such a factual update should be made but this can be done without the need for a formal modification (see paragraph 4.61).
- 4.30 Policy SNP3 as modified, will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

²¹ Representation Ref: SNPS:11.

²² Representation Ref: SNPS:10.

Policy SNP4 – Medical and health (page 26)

4.31 Policy SNP4 supports improvements to healthcare in the Parish and seeks to prevent the loss of existing services that are viable. Sawtry has a growing population and I consider that the retention and improvement of existing healthcare facilities is a justified objective. However, in response to an objection from HDC²³, SPC suggest modifications to this policy²⁴ and I agree that modifications are necessary in the interests of clarity, and I recommend accordingly in **PM6**.

Policy SNP5 – Community facilities (page 28)

4.32 Policy SNP5 supports the appropriate provision and/or improvement of community facilities but a decision maker would require greater clarity with regard to the occupancy of the facility, as referred to in the second clause of the policy, and **PM7** is therefore recommended.

4.33 The Environment Agency²⁵ advise that the proposed extension to St Andrew’s Cemetery would have to meet a number of environmental requirements, including in relation to flood risk. The need to meet this requirement should be made clear in clause 4 of policy SNP5. Both HDC and SPC support such a modification²⁶ and I agree it is necessary to provide clarity to the decision maker. Therefore, I recommend **PM8**.

4.34 HDC suggests (in answer to my Question 2) that cross-references to other relevant documentation could be referred to in the supporting text. I do not consider this to be necessary to meet the Basic Conditions but if there is agreement between HDC and SPC, the factual references could be included as minor amendments (see paragraph 4.61).

4.35 I also consider that the wording of the final clause of policy SNP5, with regard to the loss of a community facility, should be clarified for the benefit of the decision maker and I recommend accordingly in **PM9**.

4.36 The last clause of policy SNP5 lists the community facilities which the Parish Council is seeking to protect. I appreciate that it may be difficult to accurately plot the aforementioned facilities on a plan, but I consider it would be of significant assistance to the decision maker if the location of the facilities could be identified. I am sure that HDC could assist if necessary. I therefore recommend **PM10**.

4.37 Policies SNP4 and SNP5 (as modified), on health and community facilities, accord with national advice and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

²³ Representation Ref: SNPS:12.

²⁴ See response to my Question 18.

²⁵ Representation Ref: SNPS:21.

²⁶ See response to my Question 2.

Policy SNP6 – Retail and shopping provision and village centre opportunities (page 30)

- 4.38 I saw on my visit the range of retail opportunities in the village, and I consider that SPC are justified in seeking improvements to retail and shopping provision. In particular, I agree that land at the junction of High Street and Gidding Road (R J Landrovers - as shown on Map 9) is correctly allocated as a Village Centre Opportunity Site. The appropriate redevelopment of this site would visually enhance this part of the village centre and contribute to improved local services and facilities. I agree that, if possible, the existing frontage building should be retained for its contribution to the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.39 The approach encapsulated in policy SNP6 is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan and meets all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP7 – Education and nursery provision (page 31)

- 4.40 The population of the village is increasing and, consequently, the demand for nursery and school places is also rising. Policy SNP7 confirms that, in principle, proposals for education and nursery facilities will be supported.
- 4.41 Section 7.4 of the Plan (page 31) addresses issues of highways and traffic. The British Horse Society suggests a number of amendments to this Section, but I am satisfied that issues relating to equestrianism are appropriately addressed in policies LP4 and LP16 of the HLP and that there is no justification for the repetition of existing policy advice.
- 4.42 Policy SNP7 will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and will meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP8 – Footpaths and cycle ways (page 32)

- 4.43 Policy SNP8 provides support for improving travel opportunities across Sawtry but, in the interests of clarity, I consider that it should be made clearer that the policy applies to all of the Parish and not just Sawtry village. **PM11** is therefore recommended.
- 4.44 HDC²⁷ suggests amendments to policy SNP8 regarding footpaths and cycleways. Firstly, it is suggested that the specific reference to SPC and Cambridgeshire County Council should be deleted, and I agree that this would be appropriate because there may be other parties seeking to improve sustainable transport infrastructure. **PM12** is therefore recommended.
- 4.45 Secondly, HDC suggests that other forms of linkage should be referred to in the policy, but I am satisfied that in this regard the policy meets the

²⁷ Representation Ref: SNPS:14.

Basic Conditions. In terms of 'new' provision, nothing is ruled out unless it would harm the character of the 'rural informal lanes'.

- 4.46 The British Horse Society²⁸ suggests a number of potential upgrades of footpaths to bridleways. However, I have seen no evidence regarding the feasibility of achieving these upgrades. In any event, Local Plan policies LP4 (Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery) and LP16 (Sustainable Travel) adequately address the issue and there is currently no justification for proposing specific bridleway improvements at this time.

Policy SNP9 – Off-street parking and electric vehicle charging (page 34)

- 4.47 Policy SNP9 sets out the approach of SPC to off-street parking and electric vehicle charging. The justification for this policy is clearly established in the supporting text. However, the final clause of the policy would benefit from greater clarity and therefore I recommend **PM13** (which has the support of HDC and SPC).²⁹
- 4.48 Policies SNP8 and SNP9 relate to issues of movement and, as modified, will contribute to sustainable development and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP10 – Safer Communities (page 35)

- 4.49 I consider that policy SNP10 does not make it sufficiently clear to a decision maker how the policy should be interpreted. Consequently, SPC has suggested some revised wording for policy SNP10 and the inclusion of additional supporting text after paragraph 7.4.13. I agree that some amendments to the text are necessary, but I consider that some of the suggested text is not required because, as the Parish Council correctly states, many elements that contribute to a safe environment do not require planning permission. In the interests of clarity, I therefore recommend **PM14**.
- 4.50 In terms of the policy itself, I consider it would benefit from the inclusion of more detail (as an aid to the decision maker) and therefore I recommend **PM15**.
- 4.51 Modified policy SNP10 meets national advice and all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy SNP11 – Business and employment (page 37)

- 4.52 HDC has suggested that the wording of policy SNP11 and its supporting text, in paragraph 7.5.4 should be amended.³⁰ With regard to the supporting text, I consider that this clearly establishes the support of the

²⁸ Representation Ref: SNPS:33.

²⁹ See response to my Question 3.

³⁰ Representation Ref: SNPS:17.

Parish Council for appropriate development at Oakwood Business Estate and Black Horse Business Park, and summarises the reasons why development at Brookside Industrial Estate may be considered less favourably (poor access/location).

- 4.53 I have read Local Plan policies LP8 (Key Service Centres), LP18 (Established Employment Areas) and LP19 (Rural Economy) and in summary these support appropriate employment development in a Key Service Centre such as Sawtry. I consider that policy SNP11 is locally distinctive, and in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan.
- 4.54 I also consider that there is no need to refer to 'scale' in the second clause of policy SNP11 because this is adequately addressed in the aforementioned Local Plan policies. I therefore recommend the deletion of the reference to scale in the policy, but agree that it would assist decision makers if greater clarity was provided with regard to the potential traffic implications arising from development at the Brookside Industrial Estate. Consequently, I recommend **PM16** and **PM17**.
- 4.55 Policy SNP11 (as modified) has regard to national policies and meets all the other Basic Conditions.

Other Chapters in the Plan

- 4.56 Chapter 8 (page 38) cross-references the objectives and policies of the SVNP with those in the HLP and the NPPF and, as such, provides a useful reminder of the inter-relationship of policies. This is followed in Chapter 9 (page 41) by a list of Non-planning objectives. These are clearly identifiable as aspirations of the Parish Council which cannot be addressed through the SVNP.³¹
- 4.57 Chapter 10 (page 42) includes 11 Maps which provide locational information, primarily with regard to the policies of the SVNP. Statistical information about the community is given in Chapter 11 (page 55).
- 4.58 Chapter 12 relates to Implementation and Delivery (page 58) and Chapter 13 (page 60) is entitled Monitoring and Review. Both chapters provide appropriate information regarding the evolution of the SVNP. The final chapter (14 on page 61) is a glossary of terms.
- 4.59 Although these aforementioned chapters are relatively extensive, they do provide additional information which may be of value to the decision maker and as such I consider that they are in accord with the Basic Conditions.

³¹ PPG Reference ID: 41-004-20190509.

Other Matters

4.60 A number of representations were submitted (at the Regulation 16 stage) by the Middle Level Commissioners³² but I am satisfied that the issues raised are appropriately addressed in other documentation, such as the NPPF (section 14) and Huntingdonshire Local Plan policies LP5: Flood risk; LP6: Waste Water Management; LP15: Surface Water; LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity; and LP38: Water Related Development.

Minor Amendments

4.61 Amendments to the text can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes³³, factual up-dates, or corrections in agreement between the Parish and District Councils.³⁴

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates, and I conclude that the Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (as modified) has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond that boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

³² Representation Ref: SNPS:23 to SNPS:28.

³³ PPG Reference ID:41-106-20190509.

³⁴ See for example Representation Ref: SNPS:6 and SNPS:18.

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Overview

- 5.4 The Parish of Sawtry displays a wide range of building styles and land uses and there are opportunities for further enhancement, for example, in the centre of the village. Overall, I found that the architecture, use of materials, provision of services and facilities and the proximity of open space, all contribute to making the Parish an attractive place to live and work. It is clear that local residents value the character of the locality and the wide range of facilities that the village provides.
- 5.5 The SVNPN is a very well presented document, and the text has a clear flow, which is of benefit to the decision maker. It is evident that significant effort has been invested in the preparation of the Plan and there is no reason to doubt that the community's Vision for the Parish, of *preserving the rural character of the village, whilst developing community services and encouraging new businesses*, will be achieved.

David Hogger

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications (17)

Notes:

- Additions are shown in **bold** and deletions denoted with ~~strikethrough~~.
- Page references are those in the submitted draft Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan.
- In the interests of brevity, where whole paragraphs have been deleted, the modification refers to the deletion of all the text.

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Pages 18 and 19 Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.6	Remove <u>all</u> of Chapter 4 (paragraphs 4.1 to 4.6) to form a new Appendix 2. (Note: Subsequent Chapter and paragraph numbers will have to be changed).
PM2	Page 21 Paragraph 7.1.2	Modify the penultimate sentence of paragraph 7.1.2 to read: This includes addressing windfall housing proposals and potential rural exception sites (which could be considered in Sawtry if there is local needs evidence).
PM3	The plans on Pages 48, 77 and 81 (Policy SNP1)	Modify the boundaries of LGS sites 13 (St David's Way and All Saints Way) and 17 (St Judith's Field and dog walking area) so that 'land pending ownership' (as identified on Plan 1 of the Evidence for Local Green Spaces March 2023) is excluded.
PM4	Page 25 Policy SNP3	Modify the first sentence to read: Land north of Greenfields shown on Map 7 in chapter 10 is identified for community use and proposals to create new or enhanced community facilities for recreation and leisure, including new pitches, together with associated infrastructure, including additional

		parking and /or drainage measures, will be supported.
PM5	Page 25 Policy SNP3	Modify the last sentence of the policy to read: Other recreation and leisure D developments in the Parish will be supported which if they extend or improve the existing sporting, leisure and recreational facilities, including the sports pavilion on the existing Greenfield site subject to including suitable landscaping.
PM6	Page 26 Policy SNP4	Delete <u>all</u> of the second clause in the policy and replace it with: Development proposals that would result in the loss of medical or health facilities will not be supported unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence is provided to demonstrate that they are poorly used or not viable in terms of community demand or need for that specific type of primary care service; or • adequate replacement provision is made elsewhere nearby, within or close to the community served by the geographical catchment for the specific medical or health facility.
PM7	Page 28 Policy SNP5	Modify the first sentence of the second clause of the policy to read: Proposals which look to develop or replace to redevelop, extend or replace an existing community facility facilities through enabling development on part or all of the land or buildings occupied by the existing community facility , will be supported where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated through viability evidence that all profits are being reinvested in the development of

		enhanced or additional community facilities.
PM8	Page 28 Policy SNP5	Delete <u>all</u> of the penultimate clause and replace it with: Land east of St Andrew’s cemetery, as shown on Map 8 in chapter 10, is identified for cemetery use and proposals to create new or enhanced cemetery facilities will be supported. An appropriate risk assessment will need to accompany any planning application. Proposals to use this land for any alternative use will not be supported.
PM9	Page 29 Policy SNP5 (final clause)	Delete <u>all</u> of the final clause and replace it with: Development proposals that would result in the loss of a community facility, as identified on Plan --³⁵, will not be supported unless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence is provided to demonstrate that the facility is poorly used or not viable in terms of community demand/needs; or • adequate replacement provision is made elsewhere, within or close to the community served. [See PM10 below].
PM10	Page 28/29	Insert a Plan which identifies the community facilities to which policy SNP5 applies.
PM11	Page 32 Policy SNP8	In the second line of the policy insert ‘the Parish of’ before Sawtry.
PM12	Page 32 Policy SNP8	Modify the second sentence of policy SNP8 to read: Proposals of parties, including local land owners, community organisations,

³⁵ To be numbered by the Parish Council.

		<p>Sawtry Parish Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to develop or improve appropriate sustainable transport infrastructure will be supported.</p>
PM13	<p>Page 34 Policy SNP9</p>	<p>Delete <u>all</u> of the final clause and replace it with:</p> <p>Proposals to develop on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including through the use of existing street furniture across Sawtry will be supported subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they should not adversely affect the historic environment or highway or pedestrian safety; • they are in compliance with other relevant legislation, for example section 278 of the Highways Act 1980; and • they do not detrimentally impact areas of significance as referenced in the HDC Landscape and Townscape SPD (March 2022)
PM14	<p>Page 35 Paragraph 7.4.13</p>	<p>Insert a new paragraph of text after paragraph 7.4.13 to read:</p> <p>The Parish Council considers that a variety of measures will be needed to enhance the personal safety of individuals. In new development this will include designing layouts that promote opportunities for natural surveillance and ensuring that pedestrian linkages are well lit and avoid the potential for anti-social behaviour. The aim should be to ensure that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or social cohesion.</p>

PM15	Page 35 Policy SNP10	<p>Add a new second clause in the policy to read:</p> <p>The Parish Council will support appropriate proposals which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a layout of development which creates safe, convenient and overlooked attractive streets and spaces; • high quality open space which is integral to the overall layout of the development; • carefully planned landscaping; and • other appropriate measures to improve public safety.
PM16	Page 37 Policy SNP11	<p>Delete all of the second clause of the policy and replace it with:</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan looks to encourage appropriate proposals that comply with development plan policies connected with the Established Employment Area at Black Horse Business Park and the permitted Oakwood Business Park. Proposals for high quality and professional occupation employment, such as research and development, that would diversify the existing local employment provision will be particularly supported.</p>
PM17	Page 37 Policy SNP11	<p>Add a new final clause to the policy to read:</p> <p>Proposals at or relating to Brookside Industrial Estate will need to satisfactorily demonstrate that traffic movements, particularly HGV movements that would need to go through Sawtry, would not lead to unacceptable impacts on the historic environment; living conditions (including relating to</p>

		noise and disturbance); air quality; and pedestrian safety within the Parish.
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