

Local Plan milestone reached as Inspector publishes initial findings



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The independent inspector appointed to examine the draft North Norfolk Local Plan has published his initial findings, following a series of public examination hearings held earlier in the year.

The dispatch of the inspector's post-hearings letter had been delayed by the announcement – in May - of the UK General Election.

In his letter, the inspector, Mr David Reed, confirms that the Council has met the Duty to Cooperate (with neighbouring authorities) and met other legal requirements relating to the preparation of the Plan.

He also concludes that 'there is a clear way forward for the Plan', subject to addressing a number of main soundness issues identified in the letter, including:

- **Housing need and supply** – considering options to provide additional dwellings over an adjusted Plan period of 2024-2040 in order to address an identified shortfall of housing, and to allow for flexibility and contingency across the Local Plan period.
- **Spatial strategy** – considering a range of options to broaden the 'Small Growth Villages' element of the settlement hierarchy to allow for additional growth.
- **Evidence update** – an updated Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment to assess the latest need in line with best practice (already commissioned).

The letter will now be considered by the Council before further public consultation is undertaken to seek feedback on the proposals for addressing the Inspector's main areas of concern.

With many positives to take from the initial report, the Council is optimistic that the Local Plan can proceed to successful adoption in early 2025.

The Inspector's post-hearings letter, along with all of the latest examination news, can be viewed at: www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/localplan

Cllr Andrew Brown, Planning & Enforcement Portfolio Holder, said:

“We are pleased to receive this update from the Inspector on our Local Plan – the Plan is at an advanced stage, and this is important news for the Council and a range of interested parties and key stakeholders who are keen to see progress.”

“Many local authorities across the country paused their plan-making processes to await government changes to the planning system, however, we remain committed to adopting a new Local Plan as quickly as possible to ensure that the Council retains control over where and how development takes place, the standards that we expect to be met in delivering sustainable development, and so that residents and organisations in North Norfolk benefit from up-to-date development plan policies on which sound development decisions can be based.”

“We recognise that there are some remaining issues to address including identifying more sites and other options to modestly increase the supply of housing - and we will now move forward to respond positively to this challenge.”

“Throughout this period, we will be keeping a close eye on any new government announcements regarding their ambitions to make the Planning system better.”

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