

# **Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan 2016 - 2036**

**Report by Independent Examiner**

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Summary and Conclusion	4
Introduction	4
Legislative Background	5
Policy Background	5
EU Obligations	7
The Neighbourhood Plan Preparation	9
The Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan	11
STRAD1: Development Strategy and Principles	13
STRAD2: Design Principles	16
STRAD3: Housing Mix	18
STRAD4: Utilities Provision	19
STRAD5: Flood Mitigation	20
STRAD6: Education and Health Infrastructure	21
STRAD7: Community Infrastructure	22
STRAD8: Highway Access and Pedestrian Movement	23
STRAD9: New Estate Roads	24
STRAD10: Parking Provision	25
STRAD11: Local Green Spaces	26
STRAD12: Historic Environment & Design	27
STRAD13: Light Pollution	28

STRAD14: Existing Employment Sites	29
STRAD15: Retail Provision	31
STRAD16: Land North of Laxfield Road	32
STRAD17: Land East of Farriers Close	32
STRAD18: Land South of New Street	33
STRAD19: Land South of Mill Lane	35
STRAD20: Land at Grove Farm	36
Referendum & the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Area	37
Minor Modifications	37
Appendix 1 Background Documents	38

## Summary and Conclusion

1. The Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan has a clear vision supported by six place objectives and six people objectives.
2. There is not an up-to-date strategic policy against which to assess overall housing figures. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced in parallel with the production of the emerging Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates five sites for residential development for a minimum of 219 dwellings to be built in the period 2016 to 2036. I have found that these sites are deliverable and will contribute towards sustainable development.
3. I have recommended modification to some of the policies in the Plan, for the reasons set out in detail below. I have recommended the deletion of Policy STRAD9. It is not possible to modify this policy to meet the Basic Conditions.
4. Even though I have recommended a number of modifications to the Plan, these do not significantly or substantially alter the intention or nature of the Plan.
5. **Whilst I have set out my reasoning under individual policies, my overall conclusion is that, subject to my recommendations, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions. It is appropriate to make the Plan. Subject to my recommendations being accepted, I consider that the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan will provide a strong practical framework against which decisions on development can be made. I am pleased to recommend that the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan, as modified by my recommendations, should proceed to Referendum.**

## Introduction

6. On 11 September 2014 Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) approved that the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Area be designated in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Area covers the whole of the parish of Stradbroke.
7. The qualifying body is Stradbroke Parish Council. The Plan has been prepared by the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of the Parish Council. The Plan covers the period 2016 - 2036.
8. I was appointed as an independent Examiner for the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan 2016 - 2036 in September 2018. I confirm that I am independent from the Parish Council and MSDC. I have no interest in any of the land affected by the Plan and I have appropriate experience to undertake this examination. As part of my examination, I have visited the Plan area.

## Legislative Background

9. As an independent Examiner, I am required to determine, under Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, whether:
- the policies in the Plan relate to the development and use of land for a designated Neighbourhood Area in line with the requirements of Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004;
  - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the 2004 PCPA where the plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one Neighbourhood Area; and
  - that the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under the Localism Act 2011 and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
10. I am obliged to determine whether the Plan complies with the Basic Conditions. The Basic Conditions are:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority; and
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations and human rights requirements.
11. Subject to the modifications I have recommended in this report, I am content that these requirements have been satisfied.

## Policy Background

12. The revised *National Planning Policy Framework* has recently been published on 24 July 2018. At paragraph 214 it states: *The policies in the previous Framework will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans are submitted on or before 24 January 2019. A footnote explains: For neighbourhood plans, 'submission' in this context means where a qualifying body submits a plan proposal to the local planning authority in accordance with regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.*

13. The revised *National Planning Policy Framework* incorporates policy proposals previously consulted on in the Housing White Paper and the Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places consultation, as well as changes to planning policy implemented through Written Ministerial Statements since the NPPF was published in 2012.
14. In accordance with paragraph 214 in the revised *National Planning Policy Framework*, I have examined this Plan against the previous *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) (NPPF). Where I refer to the NPPF, it is to the 2012 version. This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
15. The *Planning Practice Guidance* (2014) (PPG) provides Government guidance on planning policy. The PPG is currently being revised in accordance with the revised NPPF. I have referred to paragraphs in the PPG that may be in the process of being archived as part of this revision, as it is necessary in this transition period to refer to PPG related to the 2012 NPPF.
16. Paragraph 7 in the NPPF identifies the three dimensions to sustainable development:  
*There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:*
  - **an economic role** – *contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
  - **a social role** – *supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*
  - **an environmental role** – *contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*
17. Stradbroke Parish is within the local authority area of Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC). The development plan for the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Area comprises the saved policies in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998); The Mid Suffolk Local Plan First Alteration: Affordable Housing (2006); The Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008); and The Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012).
18. The strategic policies in the development plan include policies regarding housing provision and the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment.

19. MSDC with Babergh District Council published a new Joint Local Plan Consultation Document in August 2017. This covers the period to 2036. It identifies seven potential sites for housing development at Stradbroke. Views have been sought on the suitability of sites. In addition, the Plan identifies two proposed amendments to the settlement boundary. The Plan states that many of the sites presented will not be needed to meet the development requirements of the District and not all will be taken forward in the Plan into allocations. In addition the Plan states that there is opportunity for local communities to bring forward sites for development in neighbourhood plans in parallel with the developing local plan process and in accordance with the emerging level of growth agreed with the two District Councils and opportunity to share evidence.
20. There is no legal requirement to test the Neighbourhood Plan against emerging policy although PPG advises that the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which the neighbourhood development plan is tested.
21. The qualifying body and the local planning authority should aim to agree the relationship between policies in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, the emerging Local Plan and the adopted development plan, with appropriate regard to national policy and guidance. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced in parallel with the production of the emerging Local Plan and has relied on the emerging Local Plan evidence base. While there is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to conform to emerging policies, I see no harm in there being reference to the emerging plan and conformity with it can extend the life of the Neighbourhood Plan, providing that it does not result in conflict with adopted policies.

## **EU Obligations**

22. Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended) (EA Regulations) set out various legal requirements and stages in the production of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
23. A *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Consultation* was published in January 2018. It concluded that there could be significant environmental effects arising either individually or cumulatively from the draft policies and therefore a SEA was required. The *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Screening Determination*, published in March 2018, endorsed this conclusion. Historic England agreed with this conclusion.
24. A *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan 2016 - 2036 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment* was published in March 2018. A revised version was published in April 2018,

incorporating an assessment of the neighbourhood plan policies. Despite its title, the former version of March 2018 did not incorporate a SEA.

25. SEA decisions must inform the preparation of the Plan at all stages. Stages B and C of the preparation of a SEA require the consideration of reasonable alternatives and the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the policies in the Plan. Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive states that a SEA report should identify, describe and evaluate *the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.*
26. The April 2018 Report assesses the policies in the Plan against reasonable alternatives. In particular, it considered the scale of housing development and alternative housing sites.
27. There is not an up-to-date strategic policy against which to assess overall housing figures. Stradbroke is identified as one of ten Key Service Centres in the existing Core Strategy. Policy FC2 in the existing Core Strategy Focused Review seeks to deliver 750 additional dwellings in total in these Key Service Centres over a 15 year period from April 2012. The district-wide housing provision is currently being considered as part of the emerging Joint Local Plan.
28. A fundamental constraint identified in Stradbroke was that development in excess of 270 new dwellings would be very likely to trigger a requirement for a new primary school. It was felt that a new school would be likely to require a strategic scale of growth which should be determined through the Local Plan process.
29. In 2014, (MSDC) undertook a district-wide 'Call for Sites'. This resulted in a draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) being published in May 2016. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group issued its own Call for Sites in June 2015. The sites put forward by landowners to both MSDC and the Neighbourhood Plan were combined. In August 2017, as part of consultation on the draft Joint Local Plan, MSDC issued an updated SHELAA. MSDC included six sites for Stradbroke in the Regulation 18 Joint Local Plan consultation process. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group then combined all sites put forward to both MSDC and directly to the Neighbourhood Plan process. This produced a total of 13 sites. Since that time, a further site came forward and was considered.
30. AECOM prepared a *Site Assessment Report* in September 2017. The SEA is informed by this assessment. The SEA assesses potential development sites using a colour system against 9 sustainability themes. It concludes that eight sites have potential for development. Due to the primary school constraints, it states that not all of these sites should be automatically allocated for development.



31. A SEA should have a non-technical summary of the information within the main report and this document does not have one, although there is a brief overall conclusion.
32. PPG advises that for neighbourhood plans, a SEA *does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the content and level of detail in the neighbourhood plan.* (Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 11-030-20150209).
33. As the SEA for Stradbroke is relatively simple, I do not consider that anyone is prejudiced by the omission of a non-technical summary in this particular instance. Otherwise, I am satisfied that the SEA has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC. It has identified, described and evaluated the likely significant effects on the environment of reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the Plan.
34. As regards Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA), a *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report for Consultation* was published in January 2018. It concluded: *no likely significant effects in respect of the European sites within 20km of Mid Suffolk District will occur as a result of the implementation of the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan. As such, the Neighbourhood plan does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.*
35. The *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Screening Determination*, published in March 2018, endorsed the conclusion of the Screening Report and there were no contrary comments from statutory consultees. On this basis, I consider that the Plan does not require a full HRA under Articles 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive.
36. A Neighbourhood Plan must be compatible with European Union obligations, as incorporated into UK law, in order to be legally compliant. I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations and does not breach the European Convention on Human Rights obligations.

## **The Neighbourhood Plan Preparation**

37. I am required under The Localism Act 2011 to check the consultation process that has led to the production of the Plan. The requirements are set out in Regulation 14 in The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
38. The initial plan preparation process started in 2014 and a public meeting was held in May 2014. Background research included a Housing Needs Survey in 2014, a Qualitative Research Study in 2015 and a Community Survey of households, businesses and youths in May 2016. An open day of the Community Survey results was held in November 2016.

39. The above is a summary of an extensive public consultation exercise which also included regular reports in the Stradbroke Monthly Newsletter, leaflets sent to households and handouts and displays at fetes.
40. PPG states: *A qualifying body should be inclusive and open in the preparation of its neighbourhood plan or Order and ensure that the wider community: is kept fully informed of what is being proposed; is able to make their views known throughout the process; has opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging neighbourhood plan or Order; is made aware of how their views have informed the draft neighbourhood plan or Order.* (Paragraph: 047 Reference ID: 41-047-20140306).
41. Public consultation followed a site assessment survey in October 2017. There has been some local criticism of the consultation process and method of site selection. Navigus produced the *Stradbroke Parish Council Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Site Allocations Survey Analysis* in October 2017. This concluded that: *there is no evidence to suggest any significant bias in the responses to the point that the results are not robust enough to be used to inform site selection in the Neighbourhood Plan.*
42. It is stated in responses by the Parish Council to representations on the pre-submission draft of the Plan that: *all sites were assessed using the set criteria. A proposal was put to the Parish Council on sites to be included and this was accepted by majority vote.* I note that the Parish Council meetings on 6 and 28 November 2017 were closed to the public when considering site allocations recommended by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group closed meetings on 1 November 2017 and 16 November 2017. The reason given for all of these meetings to be closed was due to the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be conducted.
43. The minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting on 1 November 2017 states: *The following evidence was used in the review process:*
- MSDC draft site assessments from SHELAA (August 2017)*
- AECOM site assessment report produced September 2017 from site visits in July 2017*
- All available correspondence from Landowners or their agents*
- AECOM draft Masterplanning document*
- Navigus report on outcome of public consultation on sites*
- Scoring matrix for each site against criteria laid down in the Site Allocation Policy.*
44. Whilst it is disappointing that the Parish Council chose to make its decision on site selection in closed meetings, it does appear that the selection process was informed by relevant background documents and the neighbourhood plan objectives agreed by the community.

45. The consultation period on the pre-submission draft of the Plan ran from 20 January 2018 to 2 March 2018. A copy of the draft Plan and supporting documentation were available on the Parish Council's website. Hard copies were available to view in Stradbroke library.
46. During the consultation period, the local community had the opportunity to comment on policies in the Plan, including site selection. I have read the representations made during that consultation period. There is both support and objection to the site selection and there is promotion of alternatives. Whilst I appreciate there are strong feelings opposing the site selection amongst some of the local community, nothing I have read in the representations indicates that the selected sites are not deliverable and I do not get a sense from the representations at this pre-submission draft Plan stage that there was an overwhelming objection by the local community to the proposed site selection.
47. I am satisfied that the pre-submission consultation and publicity has met the requirements of Regulation 14 in The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
48. MSDC publicised the submission Plan for comment during the publicity period between 19 April 2018 and 1 June 2018 in line with Regulation 16 in The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. A total of nineteen responses were received. I am satisfied that all these responses can be assessed without the need for a public hearing.
49. The Regulation 16 representations have raised concern regarding the integrity of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Parish Council. I have no authority to consider any allegations of misconduct. Such matters should be dealt with through the internal complaints procedures of the Parish Council or MSDC as appropriate.
50. Some responses suggest additions and amendments to policies. My remit is to determine whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions. Where I find that policies do meet the Basic Conditions, it is not necessary for me to consider if further suggested additions or amendments are required. Whilst I have not made reference to all the responses in my report, I have taken them into consideration.

## **The Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan 2016 - 2036**

### **Background To The Neighbourhood Plan**

51. Background information in the Plan provides an overview of the history of Stradbroke and Stradbroke today. In particular, it emphasises the importance of retaining the linear form of the village. It identifies *The Village Design Statement* adopted in 2003 and the update approved in 2012 as the basis of the neighbourhood plan. In addition, I have been provided with a

detailed evidence base in background supporting documents. This has provided a useful and easily accessible source of background information.

52. It is necessary for Neighbourhood Plans to provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency as stated in the core planning principles in paragraph 17 in the NPPF. I do refer to clarity and precision with regard to some recommendations to modifications to the Plan. Where I do so, I have in mind the need to provide a practical framework in accordance with the core principles in the NPPF, thus ensuring that the Plan has regard to national policy in this respect.
53. It is not for me to re-write the Plan. Where I have found editing errors, I have identified them **as minor editing matters** and highlighted these as such. These have no bearing on whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.
54. PPG states: *A policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.* (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306).
55. For ease of reference, I have used the same policy titles as those in the Plan. I have briefly explained national policy and summarised main strategic policies where relevant to each neighbourhood plan policy. I have tried not to repeat myself. Where I have not specifically referred to other relevant strategic policy, I have considered all strategic policy in my examination of the Plan.
56. Policies in a neighbourhood plan can only be for the development and use of land. Where there are community aspirations (identified as community actions in this Plan), these have been clearly differentiated from policies for the development and use of land.

### **Stradbroke Vision for Tomorrow**

57. A clear Vision for the Parish has been established: *Stradbroke's vision is to be a core village that works for the needs of its residents and surrounding villages by providing good quality housing, educational facilities, business and local retail opportunities. It will achieve this through phased growth of these services, and necessary infrastructure to support that growth. The NPPF principles of sustainable development will govern how to achieve this growth in a planned manner.*
58. This vision is supported by six place objectives and six people objectives.

## **POLICY STRAD1: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PRINCIPLES**

59. Policy STRAD1 allocates sites for a minimum of 130 dwellings, (184 including planning permissions). There is a mathematical error in this calculation. The minimum number of dwellings proposed on each of the four allocated sites, including the 44 dwellings with planning permission on the site at Grove Farm, equates to a minimum of 219 dwellings. I sought clarification from the Parish Council on this matter. The Parish Council replied via email on the 27 September 2018. The reply has been placed on the MSDC web site. The Parish Council confirmed that the correct figure is a minimum of 219 dwellings. Thus, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD1 accordingly.
60. The NPPF in paragraph 185 is clear that outside the strategic elements *neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area.*
61. The emerging Joint Local Plan sets the housing requirement for the whole District as 9,951 dwellings for the period 2014 - 2036. For Core Villages, including Stradbroke, the emerging Joint Local Plan has suggested options for growth ranging from a requirement of between 15 - 30% of the total District requirement. This has not been further broken down to a percentage for each Core Village.
62. The Neighbourhood Plan Examination process does not require a rigorous examination of district wide housing land requirements. This is the role of the examination of the emerging Joint Local Plan.
63. In the absence of up to date adopted strategic housing policies, it is not my role to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan would be inconsistent with the adopted version of the emerging Joint Local Plan. MSDC has worked closely with the Parish to help prepare the Plan and has not made adverse comment in representations regarding the overall housing provision. From the limited evidence before me, I consider the indicative minimum housing figure provides me with the best guidance on housing numbers for the Stradbroke Parish area.
64. There has been criticism of the housing site selection. I have already considered the housing site options to a large extent with regard to my comments on the SEA and on the Plan preparation. The criteria for site selection were based on a traffic light rating by independent consultants in their Site Assessment Reports of September 2017 and March 2018. Durrants is promoting one of the identified alternative sites at land North of Shelton Hill. Lee and Stones is promoting another at Meadow Way.
65. Subject to my comments with regard to the details of the site-specific allocations below and my comments on the individual site allocation policies, from my site visits, the evidence base and the representations received, I am satisfied as far as I can reasonably be expected to be, that the chosen sites are deliverable and together with the overall housing strategy in the

Neighbourhood Plan will contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development by the provision of sustainable growth.

66. Subject to my comments with regard to the details of the site-specific allocations below, I consider that the allocated housing sites meet the Basic Conditions. Thus, I do not consider it necessary for the inclusion of additional, or alternative, sites.
67. I consider that the proposed level of growth on the allocated sites will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development notwithstanding that others are seeking more growth and development plan documents in future might provide for additional growth.
68. Policy STRAD1 proposes a range of dwellings for each site. To restrict the total number of dwellings on each allocated site would not constitute sustainable development. Under the individual site allocation policies the number of dwellings is expressed as 'approximately between' in Policies STRAD16 and STRAD17 and STRAD18 and as 'approximately' in STRAD19 and STRAD20. In the interest of precision and to ensure contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development, I recommend that the same wording is used in Policy STRAD1.
69. Core Strategy Policy CS2 seeks to restrict development in the countryside other than in defined categories. The list of possible development in the countryside allowed outside the settlement boundary and site allocations in Policy STRAD1 is more restrictive than Core Strategy Policy CS2. In particular, it omits rural exception housing and house extensions. I see no robust evidence to justify restricting development in the countryside in this Parish to a greater degree than the restriction on development in the countryside in the rest of the District.
70. The proposed housing sites will be situated in the countryside, adjacent to the settlement boundary. Whilst Policy STRAD1 refers to development of allocated housing sites and to commercial business under Policy STRAD14 in the countryside, it does not include exceptions referred to in Policies STRAD6, STRAD7 and STRAD15. In the interest of precision, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD1 to address this matter to ensure there is no internal policy conflict in the Plan.
71. The exceptions referred to in Policies STRAD6, STRAD7 and STRAD15 are in addition to the development allowed in the countryside in Core Strategy Policy CS2. National policy emphasises that development means growth and it is inevitable that the level of growth proposed in the neighbourhood plan requires the development of sites within the countryside adjacent to the settlement boundary.
72. The Plan recognises the status of Stradbroke as a Core Village in addressing housing need in relation to anticipated levels of growth in the emerging Joint Local Plan. I consider the approach to development in the countryside adjacent to the settlement boundary to be in general conformity with strategic policy.

73. In the interest of precision, in the list of key matters to be addressed on the allocated sites it is necessary to refer to the exclusion of the requirement for such matters where there is already planning permission on Grove Farm.
74. Subject to the modifications I have recommended above, Policy STRAD1 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD1 meets the Basic Conditions.
75. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD1 to read as follows:**

**POLICY STRAD1: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PRINCIPLES**

**New development in Stradbroke parish shall be focused within the settlement boundary of Stradbroke village and on the site allocations in Policies STRAD16 to STRAD20 as identified on the Proposals Map.**

**The Plan provides for a minimum of 219 dwellings to be built in the period 2016 to 2036 and the following sites are allocated for development:**

**Land north of Laxfield Road (approximately between 32 to 45 dwellings)**

**Land east of Farriers Close (approximately between 25 to 35 dwellings)**

**Land south of New Street (approximately between 43 to 60 dwellings)**

**Land south of Mill Lane (approximately 75 dwellings)**

**Land at Grove Farm (44 dwellings – as per planning permission ref. 3774/16 or approximately 45 dwellings)**

**Development will be permitted in the countryside for the retention of existing and appropriate provision of new commercial premises, where it meets the requirements of Policy STRAD14.**

**The provision of education and health infrastructure, community infrastructure, employment provision and retail provision will be permitted in the countryside immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary in accordance with Policies STRAD6, STRAD7 and STRAD15.**

**Development on the site allocations in Policies STRAD16 to STRAD20 (excluding the existing planning permission ref. 3774/16 at Grove Farm) will be expected to address the following key matters:**

**the provision of new housing which addresses evidence-based needs;**

**the provision of key infrastructure including education, health, transport and movement, community facilities, utilities and public realm improvements, through direct provision and/or developer contributions (including Community Infrastructure Levy and/or Section 106) as directed in the relevant policies;**

**design high quality buildings and deliver them in layouts with high quality natural landscaping in order to retain the rural character and physical structure of Stradbroke, conserving, and where possible, enhancing the historic environment.**

## **POLICY STRAD2: DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

76. The NPPF seeks high quality design. Paragraph 58 in the NPPF refers to the need for policies in neighbourhood plans to: *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.*
77. Paragraph 59 in the NPPF emphasises that: *design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.*
78. Core Strategy Policy CS5 seeks to ensure that all development maintains and enhances the environment, including the historic environment, and retains the local distinctiveness of the area.
79. Core Strategy Focused review Policy FC1.1 seeks to ensure that proposals for development conserve and enhance the local character of different parts of the district.
80. Policy STRAD2 seeks to ensure good quality design. I have concern with the stipulation for the minimum size of garden spaces. I have no evidence before me to indicate how the figure of a minimum of 70m<sup>2</sup> has been arrived at. There may be circumstances where useable garden space can be below this requirement and still avoid cramming. Without robust evidence to justify the figure, I consider the minimum figure to be over prescriptive and thus does not have regard to national policy as referred to in Paragraph 59 in the NPPF.
81. Policy STRAD2 requires a landscape buffer of at least five metres where development abuts open countryside. The *Stradbroke Village Design Statement* (2003), which is a design guidance document, advises a similar size landscape buffer. To translate design guidance into policy appears to be an unnecessary prescription that does not have regard to Paragraph 59 in the NPPF. As such, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD2 to make reference to guidance in the *Village Design Statement* for a landscape buffer, rather than make it a policy requirement. I have suggested revised wording.
82. In a Written Ministerial Statement of 25 March 2015, the Government announced that it is not now appropriate to refer to any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings in neighbourhood plans. As such,



reference to innovation to achieve low carbon sustainable design in Policy STRAD2 does not have regard to national policy. Therefore, to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend the deletion of this reference.

83. The Revised NPPF is now the Government's statement of national planning policy, and most pre-existing Written Ministerial Statements should be disregarded. However, as mentioned earlier in my report, under the transitional arrangements set out within paragraph 214 in the Revised NPPF, the policies in the previous Framework will apply where the plan is submitted for examination on or before 24 January 2019. Therefore, it is necessary for me to have regard to the pre-existing Written Ministerial Statement.
84. I have included the date of the Stradbroke Conservation Area Appraisal (2011) in Policy STRAD2. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**
85. Subject to the modifications I have recommended above, Policy STRAD2 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD2 meets the Basic Conditions.
86. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD2 to read as follows:**

**POLICY STRAD2: DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

**All new development proposals - including those that relate to the site allocations in Policies STRAD16 to STRAD19 – are expected to demonstrate good place-making principles in their design and layout.**

**All new development within Stradbroke must demonstrate good quality design. This means responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment. In Stradbroke good quality design means:**

**design that respects the scale and character of existing and surrounding buildings as well;**

**ensuring development in the Conservation Area reflects the guidance provided in the Stradbroke Conservation Area Appraisal (2011);**

**recognising the importance of separation between buildings which retains a rural feel, particularly on the edge of the settlement;**

**avoiding cramming, particularly by ensuring that a residential plot can accommodate the needs of modern dwellings with useable garden space;**

**respecting the established building 'set-back' and arrangements of residential front gardens, walls, railings or hedges, with the loss of hedgerows to enable necessary access road visibility splays minimised;**

**using good quality materials that complement the existing palette of materials used within Stradbroke;**

meeting all requirements of 'Secure by Design' to minimise the likelihood and fear of crime; and

Good design should provide sufficient external amenity space for refuse and recycling storage and car and bicycle parking to ensure a high quality and well managed streetscape. In particular, dedicated off-street parking provision for residential properties should preferably be provided without the loss of existing front gardens.

Development which abuts open countryside must not create a hard edge. Proposals must demonstrate how the visual impact of buildings on the site has been minimised through their layout, heights and landscaping. In particular, the retention and planting of trees, hedges and vegetation is encouraged to soften the impact to development, retain and improve the street scene and keep the rural village feel of Stradbroke. Where a development abuts open countryside, regard should be had to guidance in the Stradbroke Village Design Statement, (2003 and update 2012), where it seeks a landscape buffer of at least five metres.

### **POLICY STRAD3: HOUSING MIX**

87. The NPPF at paragraph 50 emphasises the need to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes. Local planning authorities should, amongst other matters, plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.
88. Core Strategy Policy CS9 seeks to ensure a mix of housing types, sizes and affordability to cater for different accommodation needs.
89. POLICY STRAD3 is informed by the *Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas: Strategic Housing Market Assessment* Parts 1 and 2 (2017). In Part 2, Table 5.12e identifies the size of additional units required to meet housing need in Mid Suffolk. This table identifies, as a percentage of total net annual need, that 39.7% of dwellings are needed as one bedroom properties and 4.8% as two-bedroom properties to 2036. This is a district wide assessment that is not extrapolated down to Parish level. Nevertheless, it does indicate the high level of one and two bedroom properties needed in the District.
90. From background evidence to support the Plan, there appears to be an ageing population in Stradbroke and a need for small properties. In these circumstances, I consider the specific housing mix requirements of Policy STRAD3 are justified and would deliver a wide choice of homes, having regard to national policy.
91. For the above reasons, Policy STRAD3 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development, particularly the social role, and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Policy STRAD3 meets the Basic Conditions.

## POLICY STRAD4: UTILITIES PROVISION

92. Core Strategy Policy CS4 seeks to ensure new development contributes to the delivery of sustainable development and reflects the need to plan for climate change. Core Strategy Policy CS6 requires new development to provide or support the delivery of appropriate and accessible infrastructure to meet the justified needs of new development including utility provision. These policies are also relevant to Policy STRAD5 below.
93. Suffolk County Council in its representations during the Regulation 14 consultation stated that the explanatory text in that version of the Plan regarding surface water flooding was incorrect as the majority of the village is in Flood Zone 1. Whilst the text has been subsequently amended, I do not consider that paragraphs 5) a) ii) (1) and (2) on page 20 reflects the situation. I have no clear evidence before me to suggest that the village has critical drainage problems (as usually notified by the Environment Agency). Therefore, I do not consider it correct to imply in the accompanying text to Policy STRAD4 that the village is at a high risk of flooding. I suggest this paragraph is further modified. It is not for me to re write the Plan and **I see this as a minor editing matter**. However, I do consider it necessary to delete the beginning of the first sentence in Policy STRAD4, regarding the level of flood risk, for the above reasons. I have suggested revised wording.
94. The surface water hierarchy in the first criterion in Policy STRAD4 is explained in Policy STRAD5. In the interest of precision, I suggest that there is a cross reference to Policy STRAD5.
95. Anglian Water has commented that the criterion regarding foul drainage in Policy STRAD4 does not have regard to guidance in the PPG. As such, Anglian Water has suggested revised wording to have regard to national policy, I recommend such a revision.
96. I note the unusual electricity feed serving Stradbroke which justifies the need for the criterion in Policy STRAD4 regarding connection to the network.
97. As regard management schemes, Suffolk County Council, with reference to the Flood and Water Act (2010), has stated that it may not be possible to completely exclude management schemes which place some responsibility for the cost of drainage schemes onto residents. Therefore, to have regard to national policy, I recommend the deletion of the second paragraph in Policy STRAD4 and explanatory text paragraphs 5) a) (4) and (5) on page 21.
98. In the penultimate paragraph in Policy STRAD4 it is not clear what is meant by: *developers are encouraged to engage at the earliest stage with the owners/developers of allocated sites to ascertain whether there is a more comprehensive solution to utilities provision serving the sites*. I assume this is meant to refer to developers engaging with utility providers. In the interest of precision, I recommend such a modification to this paragraph and to refer seeking *the most* comprehensive solution to utilities provision serving the sites. I have suggested revised wording.

99. For the same reasons as stated under Policy STRAD2, I recommend the deletion of the last paragraph in Policy STRAD 4 regarding renewable energy solutions.

100. For the above reasons, subject to my suggested modifications, Policy STRAD4 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD4 meets the Basic Conditions.

101. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend:**

**1) the deletion of paragraphs 5) a) (4) and (5) on page 21; and**

**2) modification to Policy STRAD4 to read as follows:**

#### **POLICY STRAD4: UTILITIES PROVISION**

**Development proposals are expected to demonstrate that they will not worsen the existing drainage situation and electricity networks through the use of effective modern solutions:**

**For surface water drainage, this means demonstrating that all reasonable and sustainable options have been considered in accordance with the surface water hierarchy in Policy STRAD5. This is particularly the case if swales or balancing ponds are proposed.**

**For the foul sewerage network, this means demonstrating that capacity is currently available or can be made available in time to serve the development in accordance with National Planning Practice Guidance.**

**For the electricity network, this means demonstrating that connection to the network represents a sustainable long term solution to serve the development without materially increasing the likelihood of power outages to Stradbroke village.**

**Developers of the allocated sites in Policies STRAD16 - STRAD20 are encouraged to engage at the earliest stage with the utility providers to ascertain the most comprehensive solution to utilities provision serving the sites.**

#### **POLICY STRAD5: FLOOD MITIGATION**

102. Policy STRAD5 seeks to mitigate flooding. The issue regarding flooding in Stradbroke relates to surface water flooding in an area where the majority of the Parish is within Flood Zone 1. Therefore, the first sentence of Policy STRAD5 is not relevant. In the interest of precision, as suggested by Anglian Water, I suggest that the second sentence should make it clear that the purpose of SuDS is to manage surface water flows.

103. The hierarchy of drainage options outlined in Policy STRAD5 accords with guidance in PPG.

104. As regard adoption by a risk management authority, Suffolk County Council, with reference to the Flood and Water Act (2010) has stated that it may not be possible to completely exclude management schemes which place some responsibility for the cost of drainage schemes onto residents. Therefore, to have regard to national policy, I recommend the deletion of the last two paragraphs in Policy STRAD5.
105. For the above reasons, subject to my suggested modifications, Policy STRAD5 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD5 meets the Basic Conditions.
106. **Recommendation; to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD5 to read as follows:**

#### **POLICY STRAD5: FLOOD MITIGATION**

**Flood risk from surface water flows should be managed using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and the method of discharge should be as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as is possible, once the other options have been proved not to be viable:**

- 1. Infiltration into the ground;**
- 2. To a surface water body;**
- 3. To a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;**
- 4. To a combined sewer.**

**Development is encouraged to take opportunities to reduce flood risk and create betterment.**

#### **POLICY STRAD6: EDUCATION AND HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

107. The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.
108. Paragraph 173 in the NPPF states: *Plans should be deliverable. Therefore, the sites and the scale of development identified in the plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be delivered viably is threatened.*
109. Developer contributions can only be sought where they meet the tests that they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. These tests are set out as statutory tests in the *Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010*.
110. Core Strategy Policy CS6 requires new development to provide or support the delivery of appropriate and accessible infrastructure to meet the justified

needs of new development (This policy is also relevant to my comments on Policy STRAD7 below).

111. Policy STRAD6 seeks the provision of education and health infrastructure. Suffolk County Council supports the provision in Policy STRAD19 to enable the re-provisioning of the pre-school at the primary school, providing more room for primary school expansion.
112. As regards secondary education, both Policies STRAD6 and STRAD17 propose that land is provided for an extension of the grounds of Stradbroke High School in order to address the needs arising from growth in education requirements. Suffolk County Council has not objected to this proposal in its representations.
113. A very detailed *Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Viability Study* (March 2018), undertaken by independent consultants, concludes that all the allocated sites can all be considered developable over the Plan period. As far as I can reasonably be expected to be, I am satisfied that the viability of the Policy STRAD17 and STRAD19 sites is not threatened by the required education provision and that the developer contributions meet the statutory tests. Policy STRAD6 supports the delivery of appropriate infrastructure to meet justified needs.
114. For the above reasons, Policy STRAD6 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development, particularly the social role, and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Policy STRAD6 meets the Basic Conditions.

## **POLICY STRAD7: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

115. Paragraph 28 in the NPPF promotes a strong rural economy. It states that neighbourhood plans should *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*
116. *Paragraph 70 in the NPPF requires planning policies to plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities.*
117. Policy STRAD7 seeks to retain existing community facilities and encourages additional ones. In particular, it requires the provision of an extension to the Community Playing Fields as part of the STRAD18 site allocation. I have already referred to viability under Policy STRAD6 and am satisfied from the Viability Study that the viability of the Policy STRAD18 site is not threatened by the required playing fields extension. As far as I can reasonably be expected to be, I am satisfied that the developer contributions required meet the statutory tests. Policy STRAD7 plans positively for the retention of and provision of community infrastructure.

118. For the above reasons, Policy STRAD7 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development, particularly the social role, and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Policy STRAD7 meets the Basic Conditions.
119. I understand from representations that dogs are not allowed on the playing fields. Therefore, I suggest that the last sentence on page 25 is amended to reflect this. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**

### **POLICY STRAD8: HIGHWAY ACCESS AND PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT**

120. The NPPF seeks to promote sustainable transport and highlights in paragraph 35 that developments should be located and designed where practical *to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities*. In paragraph 29 it is stated that: *the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel*.
121. Core Strategy Policy CS6, amongst other matters, seeks to reduce the need to travel and make safer and easier access.
122. Policy STRAD8 seeks to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety. I have visited the Parish and seen for myself the traffic situation and particularly the two main junctions. Policy STRAD8 refers to both 'key junctions' and 'main junctions' in terms of improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety. From the background evidence, these appear to be the same thing. In the interest of precision, I have suggested revised wording.
123. Policy STRAD8 identifies Walkway Routes and seeks to protect and enhance these routes. There is some internal conflict within this policy. A Walkway Route cannot be protected from development, whilst at the same time development is required to provide direct access onto it. There may be dropped kerbs and entrances to roads that will be required to connect new development and I am sure it is not the intention of this policy to prevent such development.
124. As regards the requirement for developer contributions towards the enhancement of Walkway Routes, these must be in accordance with the statutory tests for developer contributions. It is not clearly defined in the policy where the key points of conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and vehicular traffic are. In the interest of precision, I have suggested revised wording.
125. Subject to my suggested modifications, Policy STRAD8 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD8 meets the Basic Conditions.

126. On a minor point, '(para added before STRAD9)' has slipped into the title of this section on page 27 and should be removed. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**

127. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD8 to read as follows:**

#### **POLICY STRAD8: HIGHWAY ACCESS AND PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT**

**Proposals to improve the flow of traffic and pedestrian safety on highways in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be strongly encouraged. This is particularly the case in respect of the two main junctions in Stradbroke village:**

**i. Wilby Road with New Street; and**

**ii. Queen Street with Church Street.**

**To ensure that pedestrians can move easily and safely around Stradbroke village, proposals to enhance the Walkway Routes shown on the Proposals Map will be strongly encouraged.**

**Where practical, development in the vicinity of identified Walkway Routes will be expected to:**

**provide direct and easy pedestrian access to the Walkway Route that provides most appropriate access to the main shops and services in Stradbroke village; and**

**make developer contributions toward the enhancement of these Walkway Routes where appropriate; and**

**not have an unacceptable impact on the Walkway Routes, in particular through the creation of significant additional traffic movements where this would have a detrimental impact on the safety or flow of pedestrian access.**

**In order to improve pedestrian movement and access to the countryside, development is encouraged to link in to the public rights of way network where possible.**

#### **POLICY STRAD9: NEW ESTATE ROADS**

128. The technical highway standard of road design is not a development and land use planning matter and thus is not appropriate for a policy in a neighbourhood plan.

129. I realise the local concern regarding drainage and have already commented on this under Policies STRAD4 and STRAD5. Suffolk County Council, with reference to the Flood and Water Act (2010), has stated that it may not be possible to completely exclude management schemes which place some responsibility for the cost of drainage schemes onto residents.



130. As Policy STRAD9 does not have regard to national policy, I recommend the deletion of Policy STRAD9 and accompanying text.
131. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend the deletion of Policy STRAD9 and accompanying text.**

### **POLICY STRAD10: PARKING PROVISION**

132. The NPPF seeks to ensure safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians.
133. Saved Local Plan Policies T9 and T10 seek to ensure the provision of adequate space for parking on site. However, I do not consider these to be strategic policies.
134. I understand the concerns of local residents with regard to road safety and parking and I have seen for myself the existing highway and parking situation.
135. Policy STRAD10 requires suitable off-street parking and refers to this being in accordance with guidance in *Suffolk Guidance for Parking*. That guidance, whilst advocating off-street parking, also emphasises for residential development: *a design-led allowance for on-street parking will normally be the best way to cater for visitor parking and additional vehicles owned by residents, to provide the most efficient use of land where there are no on-street restrictions in place*. Therefore, for Policy STRAD10 to only refer to off-street parking with respect to the *Suffolk Guidance for Parking* creates a conflict within this policy. This does not provide a practical framework for decision making. I have suggested revised wording. In addition, as the *Suffolk Guidance for Parking* document is guidance, rather than a policy requirement, I have suggested that development proposals have regard to the guidance rather than being required to be in accordance with the guidance.
136. Subject to the modifications I have proposed, Policy STRAD10 has regard to national policy and contribute towards the social and environmental roles of sustainable development. Modified Policy STRAD10 meets the Basic Conditions.
137. The date for the *Suffolk Guidance for Parking* should be 2015 in Policy STRAD10 and not '2105'. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**
138. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD10 to read as follows:**

### **POLICY STRAD10: PARKING PROVISION**

**Development proposals that generate an increased need for parking must provide suitable parking, having regard to the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015), in order to meet the needs of its users and occupiers and to minimise obstruction of the local road network in the**

**interests of the safety of all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. For residential development, off-street parking spaces can take the form of spaces or garaging/car port facilities, but must be permanently available for parking use.**

**Proposals that would reduce the existing level of off-street parking provision will be resisted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the amount of overall provision is adequate. This includes the public car parking serving the community facilities on Wilby Road.**

## **POLICY STRAD11: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

139. Paragraph 76 in the NPPF allows for neighbourhood plans to *identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.*
140. Paragraph 77 in the NPPF states that: *The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:*
- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*
141. I must emphasise that in order for an area to be designated as a Local Green Space, it has to meet all the criteria for designation. There is no directly relevant adopted strategic policy.
142. Paragraph 76 in the NPPF states: *By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.* Paragraph 78 states: *Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts.*
143. I have visited the Parish and seen the proposed Local Green Spaces. The Supporting Document: *Green Spaces Report* seeks to explain how each site complies with paragraph 77 in the NPPF.
144. All of the proposed sites meet the criteria for designation, other than the Tennis Courts at Wilby Road. This is because the tennis courts are hard courts. Paragraph 76 in the NPPF specifically refers to green areas with regard to Local Green Space designation. I do not consider this to be a green area. Thus, I consider the tennis court site is not suitable for

designation as a Local Green Space. Therefore, I recommend deletion of this site from the list in Policy STRAD11 and reference to the tennis courts in the preceding explanatory paragraph. Subject to these modifications, the sites in Policy STRAD11 meet the criteria for designation as Local Green Spaces. Modified Policy STRAD11 meets the Basic Conditions.

145. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend:**
- 1) the deletion of reference to the tennis courts in paragraph 7) a) iv) on Page 32; and**
  - 2) deletion of the Tennis Courts at Wilby Road from Policy STRAD11.**

## **POLICY STRAD12: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT & DESIGN**

146. National and strategic policy refer to under STRAD2 are relevant to my consideration of Policy STRAD12.
147. Policy STRAD12 seeks high quality sustainable design and refers to both the Conservation Area and surrounding area. As regards designated heritage assets, the NPPF emphasises the importance of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. The significance of heritage assets should be included in the penultimate bullet point in Policy STRAD12 in order for it to have regard to national policy. I have suggested revised wording.
148. As regards archaeology, PPG states: *where an initial assessment indicates that the site on which development is proposed includes or has potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applicants should be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation* (Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20140306).
149. Suffolk County Council has suggested modification to the last bullet point in Policy STRAD12 concerning archaeology to include reference to ensuring relevant archaeological investigations are undertaken prior to the submission of planning applications. Such a modification has regard to national policy. I have suggested the wording proposed by the County Council.
150. Subject to the modifications suggested above, Policy STRAD12 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development, particularly the environmental role, and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD12 meets the Basic Conditions.
151. **Recommendation, to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to the last two bullet points in Policy STRAD12 to read as follows:**

**Ensure that the significance of designated heritage assets and their settings is preserved and where possible, enhanced.**

**Archaeological investigations are undertaken prior to submission of planning applications and/or development if there is a reasonable likelihood or archaeological remains being found on or adjacent to the site.**

### **POLICY STRAD13: LIGHT POLLUTION**

152. Paragraph 125 in the NPPF states: *By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.*
153. Core Strategy Policy CS4 refers to the need for development to avoid causing light pollution wherever possible.
154. Policy STRAD13 seeks to minimise light pollution in this rural parish where concern has been raised regarding night time light pollution. It refers to following The Institute of Lighting Engineers (2000) *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution* or any successor document. I requested a copy of that document and was informed by email correspondence with the Parish Council that the document that should now be referred to is the successor document: *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (2011)* produced by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.
155. That document recommends local planning authorities should specify environmental zones for exterior lighting control in their development plans. Environmental Zone E2 refers to low district brightness areas and examples in this category include village locations. Whilst I see the relevance of that guidance to the Parish, that document is guidance, rather than policy. As such, in the interest of precision, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD13 to refer to having 'regard to' the guidance where relevant, rather than a requirement to follow it. Paragraph 7) c) i) at the top of page 35 should be similarly modified, as should the reference at the bottom of the page.
156. Subject to the modifications suggested above, Policy STRAD13 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD13 meets the Basic Conditions.
157. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend:**
- 1) modification to Paragraph 7) c) i) at the top of page 35 to read as follows:**
- c) Light Pollution***
- i) In a rural parish which has a flat topography, night time light pollution can be a significant intrusion when lighting is poorly designed and located. Appropriate guidance on the reduction of light pollution is provided by the Institute of Lighting Professionals and any**

development should have regard to the guidance for Environmental Zone E2 which covers lighting in village locations.

2) Alter the reference at the bottom of page 35 to: the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (2011).

3) modification to Policy STRAD13 to read as follows:

#### **POLICY STRAD13: LIGHT POLLUTION**

**New development will be required to demonstrate how it has minimised light pollution created through its proposed use.**

**Where lighting of public places is proposed, the use of downlighters will be required.**

**New development should have regard to guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals ('Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (2011) or any successor document) in respect of sites in rural locations where relevant.**

**Where possible, new estate roads should be two-way roads to avoid the need for illuminated road signage.**

#### **POLICY STRAD14: EMPLOYMENT PROVISION**

158. Paragraph 28 in the NPPF states: *Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. One criterion to promote a strong rural economy is that neighbourhood plans should: support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings.*
159. Core Strategy Policy CS2 restricts development in the countryside to defined categories. These include new-build employment generating proposals where there is a strategic, environmental or operational justification.
160. Core Strategy Focused Review Policy FC3 supports economic development proposals in rural areas, *including tourism and farm diversification proposals that cannot be more sustainably located closer to existing settlements and where the proposal is restricted in size, scale and type appropriate to a rural setting.*
161. Policy STRAD14 allows the expansion of existing commercial premises subject to a list of criteria which are primarily concerned with ensuring they are in keeping with the local character, do not harm neighbour amenity and do not cause traffic and parking issues. These are all sound planning practice requirements.

162. The last sentence in paragraph 8) d) on page 36 refers to development proposals for existing businesses outside the settlement boundary having to demonstrate that the proposals are *needed to retain the business in the locality*. The second criterion in Policy STRAD14 requires such development proposals to demonstrate that they will *provide additional employment opportunities within the parish or be necessary to maintain existing employment activities*. I have no robust evidence to justify these restrictions which do not have regard to national policy and are not in general conformity with strategic policy. On this basis, I recommend the deletion of these requirements.
163. Subject to the modifications suggested above, Policy STRAD14 has regard to national policy, contributes towards sustainable development and is in general conformity with strategic policy. Modified Policy STRAD14 meets the Basic Conditions.
164. ‘1st 2 bullet points removed’ has crept into Policy STRAD14 and should be deleted. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**
165. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend:**
- 1) modification to paragraph 8) d) on page 36 to read as follows:**  
**It is important that new employment does not encroach significantly into the open countryside, thereby having a detrimental impact on the rural aspect of Stradbroke. This is particularly important where sites are outside the settlement boundary (or sites allocated adjacent to the settlement boundary) and are therefore in open countryside. Proposals must therefore demonstrate that they have been sensitively designed to minimise their impact where they encroach into the countryside.**
- 2) modification to Policy STRAD14 to read as follows:**
- POLICY STRAD14: EMPLOYMENT PROVISION**
- The expansion of existing commercial premises will be permitted, subject to certain criteria identified below:**
- the proposals are not significantly detrimental to the character of the wider countryside or the views across it; and**
- the activities to be undertaken on the premises do not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties; and**
- there is sufficient off-street parking to accommodate workers and visitors; and**
- the activities to be undertaken on the premises will not result in significant increase in heavy goods vehicular traffic on the roads in the vicinity of the premises or elsewhere in and around the parish.**

## POLICY STRAD15: RETAIL PROVISION

166. Paragraph 28 in the NPPF promotes a strong rural economy. It states that neighbourhood plans should *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*
167. Whilst Core Strategy Policy CS6 is concerned with developer contributions, it emphasises the importance of the provision of village services and facilities.
168. I have previously referred to retail development adjacent to the settlement boundary under Policy STRAD1, so will not repeat it here.
169. Policy STRAD15 seeks to retain existing retail services and encourages new premises. This has regard to national policy to promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities and contributes towards sustainable development, particularly the economic and social roles. Policy STRAD15 meets the Basic Conditions.

## SITE ALLOCATIONS

170. I have referred to the site selection process earlier in my report and have concluded that as far as I can reasonably be expected to be, I consider all allocated sites are deliverable and will contribute towards sustainable development. I have referred to the viability of the development of the sites under Policies STRAD6 and STRAD7 regarding the proposed education and community facilities. I have referred to relevant national and strategic policy in accordance with these matters. Therefore, I will now only make comment on the detailed policy requirements for each of the selected sites below. I have visited the Parish and seen what I can of the allocated sites and surroundings. I have been aided by the aerial photographs of each site in the Plan.
171. Paragraph 9) e) on page 38 refers to vehicular congestion and pedestrian safety on Queen Street and seeks to resist significant further growth in that area beyond the allocated sites. The AECOM *Traffic Study Technical Note 02* submitted as background evidence reaches a different conclusion. That conclusion was reached taking into consideration not only the allocated housing sites, but also two potential sites that have not been allocated and employment development. The *Traffic Study Technical Note* concludes: *it is considered that the residential and employment sites considered by this study could, in principle, be brought forward by the future assessment year of 2036 without requiring any additional highway capacity improvements at the Queen Street/Mill Lane junction.* This is a technical study prepared by independent consultants and I have no clear evidence before me to dispute this conclusion. Therefore, as paragraph 9) e) on page 38 contradicts the technical study, it should be deleted. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**

## **POLICY STRAD16: LAND NORTH OF LAXFIELD ROAD**

172. Policy STRAD16 allocates land north of Laxfield Road for approximately between 32 and 45 dwellings subject to a list of criteria which primarily cross refers to other policies in the Plan and good planning practice for the sustainable development of the site.
173. The preceding explanatory paragraph on Page 39 refers to the requirement for the permissive footpath to be adopted, whereas Policy STRAD16 only states that adoption is preferable. To prevent internal conflict within the Plan, I suggest that the explanatory paragraph on Page 39 is modified to be in accordance with Policy STRAD16 on this matter. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**
174. The Environment Agency has confirmed in its comments during the Regulation 16 consultation that the designated areas for development do not appear to fall within Flood Zones 2 or 3. Thus, whilst the south western corner of the site is at risk of surface water flooding, as identified by the local community, it is not in the high risk categories specified by the Environment Agency. Therefore, in the interest of precision, I recommend the removal of 'high' from the eighth criterion regarding flooding in Policy STRAD16. Subject to this modification, Policy STRAD16 meets the Basic Conditions.
175. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to the eighth criterion in Policy STRAD16 to read as follows:**
- there is no development of land at risk of surface water flooding which should instead be used to provide an appropriate drainage solution to serve the needs of the development in accordance with Policies STRAD4 and STRAD5 (and be accompanied by an appropriate management strategy)**

## **POLICY STRAD17: LAND EAST OF FARRIERS CLOSE**

176. Policy STRAD17 allocates land east of Farriers Close for approximately between 25 and 35 dwellings with land for an extension to the High School. The list of criteria primarily cross refers to other policies in the Plan and good planning practice for the sustainable development of the site.
177. I have referred to the historic environment under Policy STRAD12. Policy STRAD17 has a requirement to protect, and where possible enhance the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area and Grade II listed Priory. In the interest of precision, I have recommended revised wording in the last two criteria. In particular, I have suggested that the settings of the Conservation Area and listed building are 'preserved' rather than 'protected'. This has regard to Section 12 in the NPPF and accords with the wording in Policy STRAD12.



178. Subject to the modifications I have suggested above, Policy STRAD17 pays sufficient regard to the significance of the setting of designated heritage assets. Modified Policy STRAD17 meets the Basic Conditions.

179. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to the last two criteria in Policy STRAD17 to read as follows:**

**the settings of the Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Priory building are preserved and, where possible, enhanced; and**

**this site is adjacent to The Priory (listed building 280217) and its associated moat. Any development designs should be informed by rigorous assessment of the significance of this heritage asset and impacts on the setting with buffers, viewpoints through the site, and design concepts informed by it.**

### **POLICY STRAD18: LAND SOUTH OF NEW STREET**

180. Policy STRAD18 allocates land south of New Street for approximately between 43 and 60 dwellings with the provision of community land. The list of criteria primarily cross refers to other policies in the Plan and good planning practice for the sustainable development of the site.

181. For the same reasons as explained under Policy STRAD16, reference to areas of high risk of flooding should be removed.

182. Suffolk County Council has suggested modification to the last criterion regarding archaeological evaluation to include reference to preservation if appropriate or proposals for other mitigation. Such a modification has regard to national policy to ensure the conservation of historic assets in a manner appropriate to their significance as outlined in the core principles in the NPPF. I have suggested the wording proposed by the County Council.

183. Subject to the modifications I have suggested above, Policy STRAD18 meets the Basic Conditions.

184. Concern has been raised regarding the setting of listed buildings including the dwelling 'Timbers' opposite the proposed entrance to the site. The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* imposes duties requiring special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The listed buildings are within a village setting and from my observations; I consider that the significance of the settings of these listed buildings can be preserved by careful and sympathetic design of development on the allocated site.

185. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to Policy STRAD18 to read as follows:**

**POLICY STRAD18: LAND SOUTH OF NEW STREET**

**Land to the south of New Street (approximately 4.4 hectares as identified on the Proposals Map) is allocated for residential development and community open space. Proposals will be supported subject to the following criteria:**

**it provides approximately between 43 and 60 dwellings; and**

**the southern half of the site is provided as community land for an extension of the existing playing fields with associated car parking; and**

**it provides a mix of dwellings in accordance with Policy STRAD3; and**

**the design of dwellings is in accordance with the requirements of Policy STRAD2; and**

**green open space is provided to serve the new dwellings; and**

**vehicular access is provided via New Street; and**

**a direct footway link is provided on the south side of New Street from the boundary of the site to link up with the existing footway on New Street; and**

**there is no development of land at risk of surface water flooding which should instead be used to provide an appropriate drainage solution to serve the needs of the development in accordance with Policies STRAD4 and STRAD5 (and be accompanied by an appropriate management strategy); and**

**it maintains or preferably improves the water quality in the Chickering Bec and its tributary; and**

**it is served by a sustainable long term solution in respect of electricity provision in accordance with Policy STRAD4; and**

**in order to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties and to provide an appropriate buffer with the open countryside and community land, landscape buffers are provided on all boundaries of the site and, where relevant, meet the requirements of Policy STRAD2.**

**As the site is on the edge of the medieval settlement and has not been systematically assessed for archaeological remains, any planning application should be supported by the results of an archaeological evaluation which enables impacts on archaeological remains to be considered and to allow for preservation if appropriate, or proposals for other mitigation.**

## **POLICY STRAD19: LAND SOUTH OF MILL LANE**

186. Policy STRAD19 allocates land south of Mill Lane for approximately 75 dwellings and a car park and bus drop off for the primary school. The list of criteria primarily cross refers to other policies in the Plan, recognises the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings and contains good planning practice for the sustainable development of the site.
187. For the same reasons as explained under Policy STRAD18, I suggest modification to the last criterion regarding archaeological mitigation.
188. Paragraph 173 in the NPPF states: *Pursuing sustainable development requires careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making and decision-taking. Plans should be deliverable. Therefore, the sites and the scale of development identified in the plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be delivered viably is threatened. To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable.*
189. The explanatory text accompanying Policy STRAD19 recognises that the list of requirements may mean that other benefits such as affordable housing cannot be met in full by a viable scheme.
190. Altered Policy H4 in the First Alteration to the Mid Suffolk Local Plan, with regard to the provision of affordable housing on sites that meet the size threshold states: *the District Planning Authority will seek to negotiate an element of affordable housing of up to 35% of the total provision of housing on appropriate sites. Negotiations with developers will take account of the identified local needs, the economics and viability of development and the availability of local services.*
191. As there is clearly some flexibility in the affordable housing threshold of up to 35%, I consider that the approach taken to priorities for this site would not undermine the delivery of affordable housing.
192. Whilst there has been local objection to the proposed development obtaining access via Mill Lane onto Queen Street, I am satisfied that the AECOM *Traffic Study Technical Note 02* provides sufficient evidence to ensure highway safety in this area.
193. For the same reasons as mentioned above under Policy STRAD17, I have suggested that the settings of the Conservation Area and listed building are 'preserved' rather than 'protected'.
194. Subject to the modifications I have suggested above, Policy STRAD19 meets the Basic Conditions.

195. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to the last two criteria in Policy STRAD19 to read as follows:**

**the settings of the Conservation Area and the Grade II listed building adjacent to the site are preserved and, where possible, enhanced.**

**As the site is on the edge of the medieval settlement and has not been systematically assessed for archaeological remains, any planning application should be supported by the results of an archaeological evaluation which enables impacts on archaeological remains to be considered and to allow for preservation if appropriate, or proposals for other mitigation.**

#### **POLICY STRAD20: LAND AT GROVE FARM**

196. Policy STRAD20 allocates land at Grove Farm for approximately 45 dwellings. Should the existing planning permission for 44 dwellings on this site not be implemented, Policy STRAD20 sets out criteria for development. The list of criteria primarily cross refers to other policies in the Plan, recognises the setting of the Conservation Area and contains good planning practice for the sustainable development of the site.
197. For the same reasons as mentioned above under Policy STRAD17, I have suggested that the setting of the Conservation Area is 'preserved' rather than 'protected'.
198. Subject to the modification I have suggested above, Policy STRAD20 meets the Basic Conditions. Rather than re-write the whole policy, I have only suggested revised wording for the last criterion.
199. **Recommendation: to meet the Basic Conditions, I recommend modification to the last criterion in Policy STRAD20 to read as follows:**
- the setting of the Conservation Area is preserved and, where possible, enhanced.**

#### **Community Actions**

200. The Plan lists Community Actions which are clearly differentiated from policies for the development and use of land.
201. Concern has been raised regarding the possibility of marketing the Sports and Community Centre as a meeting place for business, with a representation indicating that there is no room available for such a facility. If this is the case, I will leave it up to the Parish Council to decide whether it is appropriate to remove this reference from the Plan. **I see this as a minor editing matter.**

## Referendum and the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Area

202. I am required to make one of the following recommendations:
- the Plan should proceed to Referendum, on the basis that it meets all legal requirements; or
  - the Plan as modified by my recommendations should proceed to Referendum; or
  - the Plan does not proceed to Referendum, on the basis that it does not meet the relevant legal requirements.
203. **I am pleased to recommend that the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan as modified by my recommendations should proceed to Referendum.**
204. I am required to consider whether or not the Referendum Area should extend beyond the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Area. I see no reason to alter or extend the Neighbourhood Plan Area for the purpose of holding a referendum.

## Minor Modifications

205. The Plan is a well-written document, which is easy to read. Where I have found errors, I have identified them above. It is not for me to re-write the Plan. If other minor amendments are required as a result of my proposed modifications, I see these as minor editing matters which can be dealt with as minor modifications to the Plan.
206. The background on Page 7 will need to be updated to reflect the dates of the examination and referendum.

**Janet Cheesley**

**Date 19 October 2018**

## Appendix 1 Background Documents

The background documents include

The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) (2012)  
The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
The Localism Act (2011)  
The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012)  
The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations (2015)  
The Planning Practice Guidance (2014)  
Regulation 16 Representations and response from the Parish Council  
All Supporting Documentation submitted with the Plan  
Examination Correspondence (On the MSDC web site)  
Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas  
Strategic Housing Market Assessment Part 1 (May 2107)  
Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas  
Strategic Housing Market Assessment Volume 2 (September 2017)  
Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas (2000)  
Suffolk County Council Environment and Transport Specification for  
Estate Roads (May 2007)  
Suffolk Guidance for Parking Technical Guidance (Adopted November 2014  
Second Edition - November 2015)  
Institute of Lighting Professionals: Guidance Notes for the Reduction of  
Obtrusive Light (2011)