

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan
Modification Proposal (Climate Change Single Issue Review)
Regulation 15 Statement

1. This statement is made by Witchford Parish Council (“the qualifying body”) in accordance with Regulation 15 (1 f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, as amended.

2. Regulation 15 (1 f) applies when a qualifying body proposes to modify an existing neighbourhood plan. It requires the submission of a “*statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body consider that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion*”.

3. National planning practice guidance states:

“There are 3 types of modification which can be made to a neighbourhood plan or order. The process will depend on the degree of change which the modification involves:

- Minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum.*
- Material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.*
- Material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.”*

National planning practice guidance

www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#updating-neighbourhood-plan

Paragraph: 106 Reference ID: 41-106-20190509 Revision date: 09 05 2019

4. The existing Witchford Neighbourhood Plan, referred to in this statement as Witchford Neighbourhood Plan 1 (and abbreviated as WNP1), was adopted by East Cambridgeshire District Council in May 2020.

5. WNP1 is underpinned by an overriding vision;

“To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development meets local needs’.

6. The vision is supported by seven objectives:

- i. Landscape and character: To maintain the rural fenland character of Witchford. To protect the open space between Witchford and Ely, so that the village remains a distinct and separate community.
- ii. Green infrastructure: To identify, protect and enhance the green infrastructure, open spaces and valued views of Witchford and the opportunities to enjoy the Witchford countryside.
- iii. Housing: To maintain a thriving community through the provision of housing to meet the range of needs of current and future residents of Witchford.
- iv. Infrastructure: To encourage and promote the provision of sufficient infrastructure, amenities and services to allow Witchford to retain its character as a self-sustaining, thriving community.
- v. Traffic in Witchford: To address issues relating to the speed and volume of traffic through the village, and to create attractive and usable opportunities for pedestrian and cycle access within Witchford with the aim of reducing in-village car use.
- vi. Witchford to Ely connectivity: To support proposals to improve infrastructure for safe and easy travel by cycle, on foot and by public transport to Ely and to Ely train station.
- vii. Supporting Witchford's micro-economy: To support existing local businesses and to encourage increased economic activity appropriate to the rural nature of the parish.

WNP1 has nineteen planning policies which sit underneath its overriding vision and theme-based objectives.

7. There are no proposals to amend the seven existing theme-based objectives or the existing planning policies.

8. The qualifying body proposes to modify WNP1 through the following changes:

a) Amending the Vision for the WNP to the following text (the underlined words are proposed to be added to the existing Vision in WNP1):

'To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development is sustainable and meets local needs'

b) Adding a new objective to sit under the amended overriding vision: "Actively identify and promote climate change mitigation and resilience measures"

c) Adding one new policy chapter covering five new planning policies. These policies deal with delivering sustainable buildings fit for a net zero carbon future, which are resilient to the effects of climate change (CC1), protecting existing habitats in Witchford and seeking opportunities to strengthen parish-wide ecological networks (CC2 building on policy GI3 in WNP1), delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (CC3), trees, woodland and carbon sequestration implications of proposals (CC4) and supporting renewable energy infrastructure (CC5).

9. It is helpful to note that the existing policies in WNP1 are also applicable to the proposed new climate change objective. This applies to the Green Infrastructure policies as well as policies which have an impact on the need to travel through motorised vehicles (see policy themes: Spatial Strategy, Infrastructure, Village Traffic, Witchford and Ely Connectivity Policies and Supporting Witchford's Micro Economy Policies). The changes proposed through this Climate Change Single Issue Review introduce further measures to:

a) Manage and reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions linked to village infrastructure in our parish.

- Here proposed Policy WNP CC1 requires the design of new development to minimise energy demand and the intent here is to reduce the overall impact of new development on greenhouse gas emissions. The policy builds on the design considerations already set out in WNP 1 through Policy WNP H3 (Housing Design) and WNP Policy LC1 (Landscape and Settlement Character). Also applicable is proposed Policy WNP CC5 (Supporting renewable energy infrastructure). This policy supports proposals that deliver renewable or low carbon energy infrastructure that can help Witchford parish reduce its contribution to climate change. Policy WNP CC4 (Trees, woodland and carbon sequestration) is also important with respect to the management of greenhouse gases at the very local level since it recognises the important role that trees and woodland have with respect to carbon sequestration.

b) Ensure the parish is resilient as climate change occurs.

- Here proposed Policy CC1 is focused on ensuring new development is more resilient to the extreme weather events (e.g. designed-in external shading to help cope with very hot weather). Proposed Policy WNP CC2 (Protecting existing habitats in Witchford and seeking opportunities to strengthen parish wide ecological networks) builds on existing Policy WNP GI3 in WNP1 by providing important detail on existing sites with biodiversity value. Policy WNP CC3 (Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain) proposes requirements in the parish in addition to the mandatory requirements being introduced by the Environment Act 2021. Policy WNP CC4 (Trees, woodland and carbon sequestration) also builds on Policy GI3 in the WNP1 through recognising the important role that existing trees and woodland play in the parish. All three policies are intended to build resilience in the natural environment as the climate changes.

c) Assist the recovery of nature in the parish

- Policies WNP CC2, CC3 and CC4 are all relevant and, as described above, these three policies build on existing Policy WNP GI3 in WNP1.

10. In summary, the changes proposed to WNP1 through this modification proposal do not alter the existing nature of the WNP. This is because its existing content remains the same and the additional content (the Climate Change Single Issue Review) sits comfortably under the neighbourhood plan vision and alongside the existing seven theme- based objectives. The proposed changes do not alter the overall direction of the plan in terms of development.

11. The qualifying body considers the changes to be material modifications which would require examination.

12. The qualifying body does not consider that the material modifications change the nature of WNP1, therefore does not consider that a referendum is required to take place in addition to the examination.