

# WALKERN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2021 - 2033

## First Revision Modifications Statement



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# Walkern Neighbourhood Plan

## Draft First Revision Modifications

### Statement

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Draft Modification Statement has been prepared by Walkern Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body for the Neighbourhood Plan, under Regulation 17(e)(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). It is one of the consultation documents accompanying the revised neighbourhood plan, for the statutory Regulation 14 consultation, in accordance with current [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#) Paragraph: 085 Reference ID: 41-085-20180222.
- 1.2 The statement is required to set out whether the qualifying body considers that the modifications to the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood plan, giving reasons for this opinion.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 This statement sets out the background to the revision of the Plan, summarising the main modifications that are proposed and confirms why Walkern Parish Council considers the modifications are not so significant or substantial to change the nature of the 'made' Walkern Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033.

#### 2 Background

- 2.1 The First Revision of the Neighbourhood Plan was agreed at a Walkern Parish Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.
- 2.2 The original Neighbourhood Plan has been used as the basis for the review. It has been amended following consultation with the community and other stakeholders, by the WNPG with the help of the original planning consultant who was familiar with the village and the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 2.3 There was a commitment in the original Plan to monitor its continued relevance and undertake a review in five years. Monitoring has revealed weaknesses in the policies and the need for changes in the original text, including expansion and clarification of some statements. The Green Belt and the environment in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt in the Neighbourhood Plan Area are under threat and any further development must be sustainable. The impact of the eastern extension of Stevenage into the Neighbourhood Plan area, will increase traffic and pollution with extra vehicles using Walkern village as a shortcut to the A507, A10 and A120.
- 2.4 The preparation of the original Plan was delayed when a large site on Froghall Lane was refused outline planning permission. The applicant lodged an appeal and following a public inquiry the appeal to build up to 85 new homes was granted. East Herts Council acknowledged that this level of development would satisfy the housing requirement for the village as set out in District Plan Policies DPS3 and VILL1. As a result, neither the original nor the revised Neighbourhood Plan allocates any sites for housing development.
- 2.5 On Sunday 1 August 2021 the Parish Council held an open event at the Walkern Sports and Community Centre. Villagers were able to read display boards explaining why the Neighbourhood Plan was being updated and filled in questionnaires to record their views. There was a general understanding of the purpose of the review of the Neighbourhood Plan. Feedback gathered from the community at this event shaped the Regulation 14 draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, refining its objectives and strengthening its policies. The results are appended to the Consultation Statement.

### 3 Summary of Proposed Main Modifications

- 3.1 The main modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan are outlined below:
- To strengthen the District Plan Policy for the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, a 'Countryside Gap' is included in Policy WLK2 and shown on the Proposals Map, to the west of the village between the edge of the Green Belt and the village boundary.
  - Following advice from Historic England, neighbourhood plans can identify Non-designated Heritage Assets which are important to the community. Several of these have been added in a new Policy WLK4.
  - Since the Plan was originally made Box Wood has been under threat. A specific policy on Archaeology is now included (Policy WLK4), along with a policy for trees and hedges (Policy WLK7) and a 'Tree Charter'.
  - Three spaces protected for recreation have been added in to the Protected Recreational Open Space Policy (Policy WLK8). Midsummer Meadows is a new space created following the build-out of the development on Froghall Lane and the two parts of the River Beane Walk have become so much more important during the last few years of Covid 19.
  - Policy WLK10 designates Box Wood, and two small graveyards as Local Green Spaces.
  - The policy for Froghall Lane (now Midsummer Meadows) (Policy WLK 11) has been revised to guide future applications for development within the estate.
  - Design Policies have been updated.
  - A single policy for Valued Community Assets (WLK20) supersedes the previous policies referring to 'Assets of Community Value'.
  - Policy WLK21 ties the funding priorities in with the Action Plan

## 4 Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.1 To ensure that the Basic Condition in relation to SEA/HRA has been met, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report was submitted to East Herts Council. Following East Herts consultation with the three prescribed statutory bodies, on the Screening Report, and pending East Herts Council issuing a Screening Determination, the responses from each consultee are attached to the Basic Conditions Statement. They each conclude that an SEA is not required.

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The modifications in the First Revision Walkern Neighbourhood Plan are necessary and timely.
- 5.2 The modifications are in conformity with the Strategic Policies in the East Herts District Plan 2018 and with the spirit of the plan, its vision and its objectives.
- 5.3 The modifications materially affect the policies in the plan. However, they are not so significant or substantial to change the nature of the Plan. The Plan would therefore require an examination but not a referendum.