




HEACHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Objection to the Windfall Development Policy in the emerging Local Plan document
Impacting Heacham: - F117___Schedule_of_MMs_for_consultation_August_2024

Heacham Parish Council believe the proposed changes in the Local Plan document: - (F117___Schedule_of_MMs_for_consultation_August_2024), particularly the Windfall Development Policy, pose significant risks to the character and future of Heacham. As one of the largest villages in the area, already larger in population than Hunstanton, Heacham risks losing its village identity if further expansion outside its defined boundaries continues unchecked. The Heacham Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) clearly reflects the wishes of our community: to preserve our status as a village and avoid becoming a town. This sentiment was strongly expressed by residents during the development of the HNP, who have already voiced concerns about overdevelopment.

Key Objections:

1. **Conflict with Community Wishes:** The HNP was developed with significant local input and reflects a desire to maintain Heacham's village character. Expanding development boundaries, particularly by supporting windfall developments outside the defined boundaries, directly undermines this. The community has made it clear they do not want to see Heacham's growth transform it into a town. The Local Plan's flexible, one-size-fits all stance on windfall sites threatens to override this local requirement undermining the integrity of the HNP and disregarding the voice of Heacham's residents.
2. **Overburdening Local Infrastructure:** Heacham already faces pressures on its infrastructure, including roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. Further expansion, particularly outside existing boundaries, and furthermore has limited work opportunities in the village, risking it becoming a transit town, rather than the thriving village it currently is. Expansion would exacerbate these issues, stretching resources beyond their capacity. Without significant investment to match this growth, the quality of life for current and future residents will suffer. The HNP's more controlled, boundary-based approach ensures that development is sustainable and takes the infrastructure's capacity into account, whereas the Local Plan's generic windfall policy seems to prioritise housing numbers over local sustainability.

3. Inconsistent with Village Identity: Heacham has a unique village identity that contributes to its charm and sense of community. Expanding development boundaries or allowing windfall sites outside these limits' risks eroding this identity, turning Heacham eventually into a sprawling, urbanised area. The HNP's current boundary restrictions are essential to safeguarding this character, while the Local Plan's generic approach threatens the distinctiveness that makes Heacham a desirable place to live.

4. Impact on the Heacham Neighbourhood Plan: The Local Plan's one-size-fits -all approach to development, particularly for Key Rural Service Centres like Heacham, undermines the HNP's boundary restrictions, potentially making it more difficult to control where and how development occurs. The HNP was crafted to balance growth with the need to maintain Heacham's village status, and allowing development beyond its boundaries would weaken the careful planning and consultation work that went into the plan. If the Local Plan takes precedence or is simply passed unchecked on this policy, it could render the HNP ineffective, disregarding the local control that the Neighbourhood Plan process is designed to protect.

Conclusion: We strongly object to the Windfall Development Policy as it currently stands in the Local Plan. Any expansion of Heacham's boundaries should be based on local needs and conditions, not borough-wide targets that fail to consider the unique character of our village and we believe it's possible to develop this policy adaption within the plan that would demonstrate that a considered approach to planning policy rather than a blanket approach that only risks smaller communities being forced into a one size fits all approach. To local planning.

The HNP was developed with the community's clear vision for Heacham in mind, and its boundaries must be respected to ensure that we do not lose what makes Heacham special. Expansion, if necessary, must be carefully managed, and local autonomy in planning decisions must be preserved to protect the integrity of the HNP approach to development and the wishes of Heacham's residents.

Unimpressed: Our further comments are based on the considerable difficulty we encountered in locating the information on proposed changes to the local plan. It took six councillors over 30 minutes to locate and identify the correct document for the local plan review online. This inefficiency raises concerns about the accessibility of the information, which seems to hinder rather than facilitate public review. If experienced members of the council struggle with this process, it is reasonable to assume that members of the public will face even greater challenges. We strongly urge a thorough review of this process to ensure transparency and accessibility.

Paul Rawlinson

Chairman

Heacham Parish Council

Yours sincerely

