

Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan 2022 - 2037

Post Examination Decision Statement

Dated: 20 June 2025

Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Summary

Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires the relevant local planning authority to decide what action to take in response each recommendation made by the Independent Examiner and to publish its decision. This statement fulfills that purpose.

The submission draft Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan 2022 - 2037 has been independently examined by Janet Cheesley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI. Her final report was issued on 10 June 2025. It notes that this Plan has a clear vision supported by six objectives, and that it focuses on managing the impacts of any proposed growth while also ensuring that community benefits are delivered. Some modifications are proposed, but these are few and they predominantly seek to ensure that this Plan is clear and precise, and can provide a practical framework for decision making. The modifications include: updating the Policy Map, minor adjustments to the proposed new settlement boundary, and being consistent throughout the Plan in the way that it refers to 'important views.' The report concludes by saying that subject to all of the modifications being made, this Plan meets the basic conditions and other statutory requirements against which it was examined, and that it should proceed to a local referendum.

Having considered the examination report, it is the District Councils recommendation that:

'Hitcham Parish Council should make all the necessary modifications to their Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the recommendations set out in Independent Examiner's Report dated 10 June 2025 and that, subject to the satisfactory completion of that task (to be signed-off by the Head of Strategic Planning), this Plan will then be advanced to a local referendum covering the parish of Hitcham, Suffolk.'

Background

The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the relevant regulations. The key stages are set out below:

- In January 2020, designation of the whole parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area, which enabled the Parish Council (the 'qualifying body') to prepare its Plan
- Publication by the Parish Council of a Regulation 14 pre-submission draft Plan for consultation between 13 July and 30 August 2024



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- In February 2025, submission of the draft Plan to Babergh District Council, which was then made available for public consultation between 24 March and 9 May 2025
- Commencing in mid-May 2025, independent examination of the Plan. The final Examination Report was issued on 10 June 2025

The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). In order to satisfy them a Plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State,
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development,
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority, *and*
- not breach and be otherwise compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) also prescribes the following basic condition:

- The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017(7).

The pre-submission draft Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan was subject to independent screening. This concluded that an Appropriate Assessment was not required. After consulting the relevant statutory bodies on the screening outcome, the Council issued its formal Determination Notice in July 2024.

Decision

The Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan 2022 - 2037 as amended to incorporate all of the modifications set out in the Independent Examiners Report dated 10 June 2025 complies with the Basic Conditions set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and should proceed to a local referendum.

The date of the referendum will be announced separately.

A 'Referendum Version' of this neighbourhood plan, i.e., the version incorporating all the required modifications, will be published either on the day that the referendum is announced, or sooner if it is practical to do so.

References:

1. Independent Examiners Report on the Hitcham NP:
<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/babergh/hitcham-np-exam-report>
2. Hitcham NP Examination Correspondence document:
<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/babergh/hitcham-np-exam-correspondence>