

Responses to the ExA's Further Written Questions (ExQ2)
ELMESTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL
9th February 2024

Introduction

Please find below Elmesthorpe Parish Council's responses and/or notes with regard to the Further Written Questions issued by the Examining Authority on 19th January 2024.

There are a number of questions that we are very keen to see the answers to upon publication at Deadline 5, we reserve comments on such matters until that time.

To keep this document concise, we will detail the unique question reference number, a copy of the question and our direct answer.

Responses to ExA's Written Questions

2.0.1 Revised National Planning Policy Framework

In December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published. All Interested Parties [sic] are given the opportunity to make representations on how any changes affect consideration of the Proposed Development.

Answer:

The NPPF issued December 2023 refers at paragraph 181:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁶²; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

Followed by footnote 62:

"⁶² Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development."

As per the Applicant's application document ***APP-111 6.1.2 Environmental Statement – Chapter 2 – Site Description***, paragraph 2.46 refers:

"Natural England maintains a grading system for agricultural land on a scale of 1 (excellent) to 5 (very poor). Farmland within the Main Order Limits generally falls within grade 3a (good) and 3b (moderate). In general terms this means that the land can be farmed for a variety of purposes with a few limitations that affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield."

Aside from the obvious ramifications on amenity value associated with the removal of many PRow and building immediately adjacent to an SSSI, there is the concern of removal of agricultural land.

Agricultural land of Grade 3a falls into the category of Best Most Versatile (BMV) land, alongside grades 1 and 2, and therefore building on valuable farmland such as this contradicts the NPPF.

[END]