

General Comment: Stansfield Parish Council thank and congratulate West Suffolk Council for their had work on producing a new Local Plan. We have only the following few requests/suggestions aimed to tighten and remove possible ambiguity in a couple of the policies set out below:

Policy SP5

SPC welcomes the recognition of the special landscape character and quality of the Upper Glem Valley conferred by the LVL designation.

The walks and views across the ancient field patterns and woodlands are particularly valued by many Stansfield residents and visitors.

Policy LP22

Housing Need Definition

SPC asks WSC to consider introducing guidelines and criteria for housing surveys before they accept the data from them. This is to ensure that they give accurate information about potential housing need in a settlement, free from any suspicion of political or commercial pressure.

We ask WSC to ensure that any Housing Surveys they accept have been conducted in accordance with the Rural Housing Alliance codes of best practice for such surveys, with particular reference to the results being openly available, especially to the residents of the settlement concerned. Also to ensuring that there has been participation by residents in the writing of the questions in the survey. This is to ensure that the survey and its results are to be owned and welcomed by the community, to avoid suspicion of any commercial or political pressure. Housing survey data produced, even by organisations who have conducted many surveys, needs to be checked against known demographic data and against local knowledge. A procedure for checking any queried data needs to be established.

NB: Stansfield Parish Council make this request for safeguards on housing need surveys following their recent experience with an “independent” housing survey which had to be scrapped after it was publicly stated in a PC meeting to contain what was described as “false information”. Stansfield Parish Council ask for criteria to be written by WSC into the Local Plan for safeguards for how such surveys are conducted in a truly independent way.*

**Is it acceptable, for example, for local residents or Parish Council members, rather than the survey company, to distribute numbered surveys to each household and therefore for individuals potentially to be able to record which residents give which data? Also is it acceptable for extra surveys to be given to households who already have one, as this could lead to duplication of data? Is it acceptable for any errors in questions discovered by participants to be dealt with by local individuals rather than by the survey company?*

In light of our experience we will happily volunteer to work with WSC to determine appropriate criteria. We have constructed a list of Lessons Learned from the survey here which we would be glad to share with WSC.

Viability Criteria for market homes on Rural Exception Sites

Will WSC consider setting out basic criteria for viability of such sites and to limit/dissuade a developer from seeking to vary the planning permission at a later date potentially to increase the portion of market housing against affordable homes on such sites, as we have witnessed in nearby parishes.

This practice tends to erode public confidence in the planning system.

Policy LP 26

SPC would like you to consider including as a criterion for RES sites that they must not be in locations that have no sustainable transport services and links so that occupants have to rely on cars to access everyday goods and services.