

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: DEREK STEBBING B.A. (Hons), Dip. E.P., MRTPI

Anna Houghton  
Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)  
Maidstone Borough Council

Kim Owen  
Clerk to Loose Parish Council

Examination Ref: 01/DAS/LNP

7 January 2019

Dear Ms Owen and Ms Houghton

### LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Loose Neighbourhood Plan ('the draft Plan') for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have two preliminary questions for Maidstone Borough Council and/or the Qualifying Body.

#### 1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the draft Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement, the Consultation Statement and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the draft Plan, I have not at this initial stage identified any very significant and obvious flaws in the Plan that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

#### 2. Site Visit

I intend to undertake a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area during the week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019. This will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The site visit will be undertaken unaccompanied. It is very important that I am not approached to discuss any aspects of the Plan or the neighbourhood area, as this may be perceived to prejudice my independence and risk compromising the fairness of the examination process.

#### 3. Written Representations

At this stage, I consider the examination can be conducted solely by the written representations procedure, without the need for a hearing. However, I will reserve the option to convene a hearing should a matter(s) come to light where I consider that a hearing is necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

#### 4. Further Clarification

I have two initial questions seeking further clarification, which I have set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if you can seek to provide a written response by **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2019**.

#### 5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the Plan (including conduct of the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within 4-6 weeks of submission of the draft Plan.

As I have raised a number of questions, I must provide sufficient opportunity to reply. Consequentially, the examination timetable will be extended. Please be assured that I will seek mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPE office team will seek to keep you updated on the anticipated delivery date of the draft report.

If you have any process questions related to the conduct of the examination, which you would like me to address, please do not hesitate to contact the office team in the first instance.

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure that a copy of this letter and its annex, and any responses to the initial questions that I have raised, are placed on the local authority and parish council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

*Derek Stebbing*

Examiner

## **ANNEX - PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS**

### **Question 1: Re. Policy LP1 (Views Across Village & Countryside)**

This Policy refers to the Loose Road Character Assessment (2008) in part 2 of the Policy. I shall need to understand the relevance of this Character Assessment, which pre-dates the Neighbourhood Plan process, to Policy LP1 and in particular to the eight key views to be safeguarded by the policy.

I therefore invite the Borough Council and the Qualifying Body to provide me with a Note indicating how the Loose Road Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document provides a context for development proposals to be considered in relation to the views to be protected by Policy LP1 and illustrated on pages 36/37 and Figure 9.

### **Question 2: Re. Policy LP5 (Designated Local Green Spaces)**

I am not yet satisfied that there is sufficiently robust evidence and justification to support the designation of a number of the proposed Local Green Spaces shown on Figure 11 and the subject of Policy LP5.

In particular, but not exclusively, I have potential concerns regarding the Local Green Spaces shown as Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 in the Policy.

I invite the Qualifying Body to provide me with a Note indicating, in more detail, the nature of each of the specific Local Green Spaces, its current usage by the community and its key attributes in terms of the justification for designation as a Local Green Space in particular explaining how it is “demonstrably special” to the local community.

I confirm that I shall visit each of the proposed Local Green Spaces during my site visits.