

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE SHARNBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Wendy Burden BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Helen Glanville
Clerk to Sharnbrook Parish Council

Sonia Gallaher
Bedford Borough Council

Examination Ref:01/WB/SNP

17 May 2021

Dear Ms Glanville and Ms Gallaher

SHARNBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Sharnbrook Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/SNP) for examination, I would like to deal with some initial procedural points and to seek clarification on several matters in the submitted SNP.

1. Examination Documentation

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

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

2. Site Visit

I will carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area subject to the prevailing government COVID-19 advice at that time. However, before setting an approximate date for my visit, there are some matters on which I require assistance from the Sharnbrook Parish Council (SPC) and/or Bedford Borough Council (BBC). The site visit will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The visit will generally be undertaken unaccompanied by any party. However, it will be necessary for me to be accompanied if I need to access any privately owned land over which there is no public right of way. I will make my assessment as to whether this is necessary once I have further information, which I request below. Whether or not my site visit is accompanied at any time, 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 (and again further respecting the current COVID-19 threat).

3. Written Representations

Under paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) the general rule is that the examination should take the form of the consideration of written representations. I note that there are a number of requests to be heard at an oral hearing in the representations. However, at this stage I consider the examination can be conducted by means of the written representations, without the need for a hearing. Nevertheless, I will reserve the option

to convene a hearing should a matter or matters 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

To assist with the examination, reference is made in the representations to the designation of land to the rear of Sharnbrook Court as Local Green Space (LGS). I have reviewed the Landscape Character and Built Environment Assessment which has been submitted, and it is not clear which of these sites would be land to the rear of Sharnbrook Court. Is this site included in the Assessment or is it designated as LGS in the SNP under a different title?

It has been proposed in the representations that the Indicative Site Layout on page 24 of the SNP be replaced by a site location plan on an Ordnance Survey base. The reasons given are that discussions on the Masterplan for Hill Farm are on-going and it could cause some confusion in the future if the final layout differs from that shown on page 24. I would appreciate the views of BBC and SPC on this matter.

I may have some further questions which seek clarification on other matters and which I will wish to put to SPC and/or BBC, once I have received this information and carried out my site visit. If this is necessary, the questions will be set out in a further letter.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is normally to conduct the examination (including the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within 6 weeks of submission of the Plan. However, in view of the additional information which I have requested I must provide adequate opportunity for you to respond. I would be grateful for your response on or before **28 May 2021**.

Consequently, it will be necessary for the examination timetable to be extended. Please be assured that I will seek to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. At this juncture it should also be noted that there may be unavoidable delays as a result of the current COVID-19 threat, which we cannot yet predict. In any event, the IPE office team will endeavour 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 is placed on both the SPC and BBC websites. Responses from SPC and BBC, together with any additional documentation, should also be published on the websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

Wendy Burden

Examiner