

## Castlethorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

### Examination Arrangements

#### ***Purpose of this Note***

This Note sets out the basis on which the examination of the neighbourhood plan review will be undertaken. Its ambitions are two-fold:

- to comply with the CLG/NPIERS Guidance for service users and examiners (April 2018); and
- to provide guidance for the Parish Council on the key stages of the examination.

#### ***The examination route map***

Different examinations raise their own issues. Nevertheless, the following are the key components that will be applied to this examination:

##### ***Stage 1: Background Reading***

This involves reading the submitted Plan, its supporting documents and the various representations. I will take all this information into account when preparing my report.

##### ***Stage 2: Visit to the neighbourhood area***

The visit provides me with an opportunity to look at specific issues and sites in the neighbourhood area. Plainly not every component of the Plan needs to be viewed on the visit. Nevertheless, it is focused on the issues that have arisen either from the background reading and/or which are fundamental to the Plan.

The visit is unaccompanied. I will not meet with the Parish Council, Milton Keynes Council or with any of the parties who have commented on the Plan. To do so would have the potential to affect the independence of the examination process.

I am now at this stage of the examination. I visited the neighbourhood area on Friday 24 July.

##### ***Stage 3: Clarification Note***

Following the visit last week, I am preparing a clarification note. It will raise a series of questions on the proposed review of the Plan. The answers to the questions will help me to understand the reviewed Plan better and, where necessary, to recommend modifications to ensure it meets the basic conditions.

The clarification note will suggest a timescale for responses based on the issues it addresses. It is usually between two and three weeks. However, this is a matter which I am happy should proceed at whatever pace is determined locally. This recognises that work on neighbourhood plans is carried out by parish councils and individuals on a voluntary basis.

##### ***Stage 4: Decision about the need for a hearing***

The combination of the background reading, the unaccompanied visit and the responses to the clarification note will allow me to come to a view about the need or otherwise for a hearing. The legislation anticipates that the vast majority of examinations can proceed by way of written representations and without a hearing.

If a hearing is required, I will make separate arrangements with Milton Keynes Council and the Parish Council. Plainly those arrangements would need to take account of Covid:19 and any restrictions in place at the time of a hearing.

In the event that a physical hearing can take place it will be held in the neighbourhood area insofar as it is practicable to do so.

#### *Stage 5: The Examination Report*

My report will be prepared throughout the examination period. Its general parts can be written early in the process. The elements of the report that overlap with the clarification note will not be prepared until the responses to the note are received.

I will prepare a fact check report before the final report. This gives an opportunity for Milton Keynes Council and the Parish Council to comment on any factual inaccuracies and/or omissions. It will not present an opportunity for the examination to enter another phase.

#### ***Other related matters***

##### *The timing of the examination*

Plainly different plans cover different issues. Neighbourhood plan examinations are inevitably linear and are directly affected by the number of policies and the number and complexity of the representations received.

In the case of the Castlethorpe Plan Review I anticipate being able to prepare the fact check report by the latter part of August 2020. Plainly this will depend on the timeliness of the responses to the clarification note.

##### *Documents*

I will ask the Milton Keynes Council to display the examination-related documents on its website.

##### *Contact arrangements*

My principal contact will be David Blandamer at Milton Keynes Council. In most cases I will ask Milton Keynes Council to send documents to the Parish Council on my behalf.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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27 July 2020