

Newport Pagnell Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Examiner's Note

Examination Arrangements

To:

David Blandamer Senior Urban Designer, Milton Keynes Council.

Patrick Donovan Deputy Town Clerk, Newport Pagnell Town Council.

Purpose of this Note

This Note sets out the basis on which the examination of the neighbourhood plan will be undertaken. It has two principal purposes:

- to ensure that the process complies with the MHCLG/NPIERS Guidance for service users and examiners (April 2018); and
- to provide guidance for the two councils on the key stages of the examination.

General comments on the Plan itself and the examination process

The examination process should be open and transparent to all interested parties. In this context I would be grateful if Milton Keynes Council would publish this note on its website together with any further examination documents which are produced during the process.

All communication during the examination will be with Milton Keynes Council. It would be helpful if the Town Council could channel any communication to me through Milton Keynes Council, and Milton Keynes Council sends a copy of any correspondence with me to the Town Council.

I have looked at the main submission documents. Subject to my later detailed assessment of the Plan I have not identified any obvious fundamental procedural flaws in the submission documents that would lead me to advise the examination should not begin.

Milton Keynes Council has provided me with website links to the submitted documents, and to the Regulation 16 representations submitted during the publicity period. I will take all this information into account during the examination together with any further information which arises during the process.

The examination route map

Different examinations raise their own issues. Nevertheless, the examination of the Newport Pagnell Plan review will have the following key stages:

Stage 1: Background Reading

This involves reading the submitted Plan, its supporting documents and the various representations.

This stage of the examination will take place this week.

Stage 2: Visit to the neighbourhood area

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

The visit will be unaccompanied. I will not meet with representatives of the Town Council, Milton Keynes Council or 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 will visit the neighbourhood area next week. The visit will take account of the Covid:19 restrictions and social distancing arrangements.

Stage 3: Clarification Note

Shortly after the visit I will prepare a clarification note. It will raise any questions that I may have on the submitted Plan. The answers to the questions will help me to understand the 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. The timescale is usually two weeks. However, this is a matter which I am happy should proceed at whatever pace is determined locally. This acknowledges that work on neighbourhood plans is carried out by local 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 as part of the examination process. 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 you. In the current circumstances any hearing would take place electronically.

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 which overlap with any questions included in 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 will give an opportunity for the two council to comment on any factual inaccuracies and/or omissions within the report. It will not present an opportunity for the examination to enter another phase.

Other related matters*The examination timetable.*

Plainly different neighbourhood plans address different issues. Neighbourhood plan examinations are inevitably linear and are directly affected by the number of policies in the plan itself, the complexity of the representations received and the extent to which the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions.

In the case of the Newport Pagnell Plan I anticipate being able to send the fact check report in late April 2021. Plainly this will depend on the timeliness of the responses to the clarification note.

Contact arrangements

My principal contact throughout the examination will be David Blandamer at Milton Keynes Council.

Further details

A guide to neighbourhood plan examinations can be found at:

<https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professionalstandards/regulation/drs/drs-services/npiers-planning-guidance-to-serviceusers-and-examiners-rics.pdf>

Please let me know if you any questions relating to the examination process which are not otherwise addressed in this note.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

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29 March 2021