

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE DRONFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:
Christopher Collison BA(Hons) MBA MRTPI MIED MCMI IHBC

To Andrew Tristram Town Clerk Dronfield Town Council and Richard Cooper
Principal Planning Officer North East Derbyshire District Council

(copy to Cllr Angelique Foster Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and
Leader of Dronfield Town Council, and Helen Fairfax and Philipp Tschavoll both
NEDDC)

By email dated 7 June 2019

Dear All

Dronfield Neighbourhood Development Plan Independent Examination - Examiner Initial Letter

Further to my appointment to undertake the Independent Examination of the Dronfield Neighbourhood Development Plan I am writing to clarify how I will conduct the examination which will formally commence on Monday 10 June 2019.

1. Communications

It is essential that the examination process is open and transparent to all interested parties. I would be grateful if the District Council and the Town Council could publish this email on their respective websites. I will address all future communication to the District Council and send a copy to the Town Council. It would be helpful if the Town Council could channel all communication to me through the District Council, and that, when writing to me, the District Council sends a copy to the Town Council.

2. National Planning Policy Framework

The most recent National Planning Policy Framework, that includes minor clarifications in respect of the July 2018 version, was published on 19 February 2019. Paragraph 214 of the most recent Framework states *“The policies in the Framework published in March 2012 will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans were submitted on or before 24 January 2019”*. The Town Council website confirms the Dronfield Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to the District Council on 23 January 2019. As a point of clarification, I confirm I will undertake the Independent Examination in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012.

3. Examination documents

The District Council has provided me with copies of the main submission Neighbourhood Plan documents; each of the Regulation 16 representations received during the publicity period; and a copy of the District Council representations. I have access to supporting documents, additional to the main Plan documents provided to me, on the District Council website and the Town Council website. I understand an Addendum to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report is currently being prepared which will be published and submitted to me.

All documents that are sent to me should be available for inspection by interested parties. This is best achieved through publication on the District Council website.

I have looked at the main submission Plan documents. Subject to my later detailed assessment I have not identified any obvious fundamental flaws in the submission documents that would lead me to advise the examination should not proceed. If I find that there are significant issues which may prevent the Neighbourhood Plan meeting the Basic Conditions and other requirements, that cannot be addressed through modifications, I will notify you during the examination.

I have asked the District Council to advise me what are regarded by the Local Planning Authority as the strategic policies of the Development Plan applying in the Dronfield Neighbourhood Area.

I am providing an opportunity for the Town Council to comment on the representations of other parties. There is no obligation on the Town Council to offer any comments but this opportunity can prove helpful where representations of other parties include matters that have not been raised earlier in the plan preparation process. The Town Council should submit any comments to me, via the District Council, no later than 12.00 noon on Monday 24 June 2019. The Town Council may, at an earlier date, submit its comments, or confirm it does not intend to submit any comments on the representations. Any Town Council comments should be published on the District Council website. Town Council comments must not include new evidence.

4. Independence

From my initial review of the Neighbourhood Plan documents it would appear that there are no conflicts of interest that would call into question my independent status. I will keep that matter under review throughout the examination.

5. Visit to the Neighbourhood Plan area

After I have thoroughly reviewed the Neighbourhood Plan documents, representations, and any comments of the Town Council, I intend to visit the plan area as this will assist me in understanding the nature of the

Neighbourhood Plan and points made in representations or comments, and help me decide if there are any issues to be clarified. I will undertake this visit on an unaccompanied basis as it is important that there should be no perception that I have heard additional representations.

6. Clarification procedure

I may at any time during the Independent Examination seek written clarification of any matters that I consider necessary. I will direct any request for clarification to the District Council, copying in the Town Council. I will request any response is agreed as a joint response of the Town and District Councils. Any request for clarification and any response should be published on the District Council website.

At this stage I request a clarification as follows: Paragraph 1.1.5 of the SEA/HRA Screening Report states *“In forming its determinations, consultation will be undertaken with the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the regulations (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency) as well as North East Derbyshire District Council on whether a SEA and HRA is required”*. Please confirm all three statutory bodies (Historic England, Natural England, and Environment Agency) were consulted in respect of the SEA Screening, and Natural England were consulted with respect to the HRA Screening.

I am proceeding on the basis that the examination can be concluded without the need for a hearing. At any time before I issue my final report, I may call a hearing if I consider this is necessary to ensure adequate examination of any issue, or to allow a person a fair chance to put a case.

7. Examination timetable

The main determinants of how long the examination will take are firstly the number and complexity of the Neighbourhood Plan policies; the clarity of supporting evidence; and the number and nature of representations. Assuming a hearing will not be necessary, and I receive a satisfactory Addendum to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report during June 2019, I anticipate that in early July 2019 I will be able to send a confidential draft of my report to the District Council and the Town Council to allow an opportunity to check whether there are any factual errors. This will not be an opportunity for any further representations to be made.

8. Procedural questions

I would be pleased to address any questions relating to the examination process that the District Council or the Town Council may have.

I should be grateful if the District Council and the Town Council could acknowledge receipt of this email.

Best regards

Chris Collison
Independent Examiner
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