

Willoughby Neighbourhood Development Plan

Examination Arrangements

Purpose of this Note

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

- to comply with the NPIERS procedural guidance (April 2018); and
- to provide guidance for the Parish Council on the key stages through which the examination will progress.

The examination route map

Different examinations raise their own issues. Nevertheless, the following will be the principal elements of this examination:

Stage 1: Background Reading

This involves reading the submitted Plan and its supporting documents. I will also read the various representations and take them into account during the examination.

Stage 2: Visit to the neighbourhood area

This provides me with an opportunity to visit the neighbourhood area and look at specific issues and sites. Plainly not every component of the Plan needs to be viewed on the visit. I will focus my time on looking at the issues that have arisen either from the background reading or which are fundamental to the Plan.

The visit will be unaccompanied. I will not meet with either the Parish 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 currently anticipating that I will have completed Stages 1 and 2 by 23 August 2019.

Stage 3: Decision about the need for a hearing

The combination of the background reading and the unaccompanied visit 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 the Borough Council and the Parish Council. I will traditionally leave at least 10 working days between making a decision on its need and holding the hearing. A hearing will be held in the neighbourhood area wherever it is practicable to do so.

Stage 4: Clarification Note

I will issue a clarification note shortly after the visit has taken place. It will raise a series of questions that I have identified as a result of my background reading and the visit to the neighbourhood area. The answers to these questions will help me to understand the Plan better and, where appropriate, to recommend modifications to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. The note will also provide an opportunity for the Parish Council to comment on the representations received.

The clarification note will suggest a timescale for responses. However, this is a matter which I am happy should proceed at your pace, recognising that neighbourhood plans are traditionally prepared by local councils on a voluntary basis.

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 produced until the responses to the note are received.

I will prepare a fact check report before the final report. This gives an opportunity for the Borough 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 into another phase.

Other related matters

The length of the examination

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

However, on average an examination of a rural neighbourhood plan will take between four and six days. These working days will be spread over several weeks. This takes account of the examination route map. In the case of the Willoughby Plan I anticipate sending the fact check report by the middle of September 2019.

Documents

I will ask the Borough Council to display all examination-related documents on its website.

Contact arrangements

My principal contact will be Martin Needham at the Borough Council. In some cases, information and updates may be sent both to that Council and to the Parish Council.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Willoughby Neighbourhood Development Plan

12 August 2019